呼び出された殺戮者
IDO 井戸正善 Masayoshi

遠野一二三（とおのひふみ）
小さいころから数々の武術を修め、使える武器は
刀・槍・鎖鎌・各種暗器など多岐にわたる。
オーソングランデの勇者として呼び出されたが……。
イメラリア・トリエ・オーソングランデ
オーソングランデ王国の第一王女。
お淑やかで世間知らずな所はあるが、芯の強さを見せる面も。
国を良くすることを第一に考えている。

オリガ
カーシャと一緒に騙され、
奴隷に堕とされたところを一二三に買われた元冒険者。
冒険者時代は主に魔法で戦っていた。
カーシャ
オリガと共にパーティを組んでいた
双剣使いの元冒険者で現在は一二三の奴隷。
共に奴隷に堕ちてしまったオリガを常に気にかけている。

1. Flip The Switch

Tono Hifumi pointed the tip of his katana at a young girl's throat. Her slender neck trembling in fear, the girl made no sounds while staring tearfully at the katana aimed at her throat.

The Japanese sword is a beautiful weapon. A blade crest which

is said to be “Scent of determination” is not a simple curved surface and has a personality that carries a sharpness that sublimates the real nature of the blade.

And now,

It’s a beautiful girl.

Hifumi, glancing at the girl thought.

She had beautiful silvery grey hair, now slightly blue because of the tears falling from her clear greeish-blue pupils devoid of malice. Their eyes met. Her eyes clearly showing fear, shaking, tears running down her pale cheeks.

The girl does not seem like a villain. Hifumi felt doubt. Without breaking eye contact, Hifumi expanded his field of vision to encompass his surroundings. For ordinary people, this was very difficult, but to Hifumi, it was simple. Visiting the boundary of life and death many times during his insane training has led to this result.

An old fashioned but luxurious room with a breadth of about 20 tatami mats size. Walls made of stone, without windows, only the light of some burning torches flickered. On the opposite side of the girl, a great double-door exit was visible. Only a foot away from the place where Hifumi and the girl stood, covered completely in armour, a Knight holding a short spear for indoor use pointed it at Hifumi with an expression of anger and shouted

「Get away from the Princess!」

Hifumi did not react to the angry voice of the Knight.

Calmly analysing his surroundings, Hifumi confirmed six people armed with the same equipment.

He could not see behind him, but the sounds behind him gave away the number of people.

At a glance, he saw that the armour was of a really tough metal, the helmet also tightly against the cheek with almost no weak spots. He made an educated guess and thrust the point of his katana at a certain spot. *Well, I guess you do now*.

From their behavior, while feeling that there were no enemies of a comparable skill level, he recalled the circumstances due to which he fell into this situation…

That day, Hifumi had finished his daily morning practice and was sitting in meditation in front of the dojo. Slowly inhaling the

crisp and cold morning air, feeling something within him stir, in order to suppress the feelings, a slight quiver passed through him.

For Hifumi, this abnormal and severe practice of mind and matter was also a time for him to relax more than anything else. Until he was 18 years old, it seems to have settled down, or rather, he's acting more his age and enjoying anime, manga and novels relaxedly. (TLN: Quite sure I messed this part up)

Other than martial talents, a very ordinary young man.

Next to him lay his favorite Iaido katana. Without excessive decoration, a black sword of simple make. Although inexpensive, inherited from his master, he treated it with great respect, a peerless sword.

Suddenly, he sensed presences behind him.

However, no malice could be felt from them.

「…Who's there ? 」

「 Ho～ , to be able to sense our presences. 」

A man's hoarse voice responded to Hifumi's question.

Turning around, Hifumi saw an old man, resembling the legendary Zeus from Greece's mythology, and a great warrior from the Warring States era with a bone naginata hanging from his waist.

Hifumi involuntarily frowns.

What a mismatched duo. And…

「It's not a …. Human? 」

Humans have a 'feeling of life', but that feeling of 'life' cannot be felt from him.

「Me, I am a real human 」

This time, the great warrior answered.

His behavior, it was befitting of that of an expert.

Hifumi was already in a stance allowing him to draw the katana at his side instantly.

「 No need to be so nervous. Although we have some bad news, we mean you no ill-will. 」

「 Bad news? 」

「 Wait a minute, before explaining, I will introduce myself. 」

The old main said while stroking his beard.

「 Well, I am a God. You might say different gods belong to different religions, as a rule of thumb, this world's jurisdiction is under me, who is like a representative of god. And thus, those that control the military arts, the samurai, are gods. 」(TN: This confused me a little.)

The man that introduced himself as the god of martial arts, folded his arms while laughing.

「 I saw something in you. Warriors have become scarce in this era, also, those that practice diligently like you are very few. With your genius abilities, with great efforts, you have broken through the limits of humans and greatly pleased the god of martial arts. 」

「 Well, I do not know the reason. Even looking at the past, I was brought up in an ordinary household, with a non-interference policy. An episode that provided input to martial arts doesn't exist. 」

As the god of martial arts said, Hifumi's fighting power had already reached a cheat-like level. He acquired all the skills that the founder of the school left behind solely from experience, as such, it was possible to easily win against all the pupils of the dojo simultaneously in a straight-up fight, it wasn't even funny.

Though having obtained the power and desire to fight, the two presences that called themselves "God" were unable to see through it.

「 Although I say god, sensing a person's thoughts is not possible. 」

「 We are not almighty, and as such, have some limitations. Normally, it is troublesome to manifest in this form. Our work, this world which can be called as a stage, we are forbidden from any personal interventions. 」

Shaking his head, the self-styled God's representative sighed.

「 Ah, well… 」 said the god of martial arts.

「 There is no too much time, we should tell him the necessary conditions quickly, yes? 」

「 Anyway, this "Bad news" is that very soon, you will be sent to a different world. So, like the fantasy novels in your room, people from a different world have summoned you into their world. 」

When Hifumi knitted his brows, the god of martial arts corrected him.

「 Aa, that is not the case. Please do not misunderstand. 」

「 Well then, why? 」

Not believing that this person was a god, yet Hifumi sensed it was not a lie.

「 Someone in that world has wished for it, forcibly connecting the two worlds by 『 Distortion 』. Moreover, the mark of summoning suits you well. Unless you cross over, the distortion will not fade, causing various effects on this current world. 」

I see.. thought Hifumi.

Being a bookworm who read all kinds of genres, such a situation seemed comparatively interesting to him. Simply put, these two self-styled gods had come to explain the situation, so as to clear any confusion in Hifumi's mind.

In all fairness, should they really be called gods?

「 Because of that, questions about the distortion can be freely asked, since you are a man of my world, I wish to do a little something for you. 」

「 That place is a so called world of "swords and magic". It is a dangerous world, you can temper your martial arts to your heart's content, without any reserve. 」

「 I see.. 」

Hifumi shut his eyes and indulged in the idea for a while. Previously smouldering feelings in Hifumi were simulated.

「 Well, our discussion had been understood. 」, Hifumi, for the time being, decided to believe the story.

「 Anyway, what do I do in this different world? 」

「 What, just defeat the Demon King on the other side, being called the hero, what else? 」

The old man answered Hifumi smilingly.

「 Rather, for us, we don't really care how you spend your time in that world. That world is forcibly kidnapping you, so to speak. You do not need to listen, even if you are asked for something there. 」

The god of martial arts said angrily, with his mouth shaped like the kana character 'へ'.

「 The world that we manage is messed up, it doesn't feel right. 」

「 Moreover, that world is much different from this world, there are brutal demons and dangerous magic, various species like elves and dwarves exist. To be thrown suddenly into such a world, it would be very troublesome too. 」

「 We are explaining this to you beforehand so that you are not be perplexed, also you have the power to fight in that world. 」

「 For example, you can use magic… 」

Though Hifumi managed to get an image, nothing happened.

「 No, no, no, magic exists only in that world, as the image of power for a person. So, let me. 」

The old man nonchalantly raised a hand, and the katana Hifumi was holding heated up a little.

「 Apart from a god's power, almost nothing can break this katana. Sharpness has been boosted, it won't bend or break, and all traces of rust are removed. This is the only gift this powerless god can give you. 」

「 And from me, the divine protection of the god of martial arts. Though you stand at the top in your dojo, and might take over sometime soon, ah well.. Now, your martial arts can power up more effectively. It seems it will be useful in the other world, where it counts as quite important. 」

「 I see… 」

On receiving the explanation, Hifumi, who had obtained the divine protection suddenly got up and headed towards the straw post used for Iai strikes.

A single flash.

Drawn from the waist, the katana cut through the straw post, not stopping there, also damaged the wall of the dojo.

The wall was split open, a cut visible on the steel frame.

「 …. This is bad 」

I only intended to cut the straw post, but even the part not touched by the blade is broken.

「 Well, you'll get used to handling it. 」

「 The effects of the summoning will begin soon enough…. 」

At the same time the god of martial arts mutters this, a geometrical formation appeared at Hifumi's feet.

「 This is…. 」

「 Haa… It's here… Hifumi, in the future, it may be difficult, but please persevere. If you wish to live, you must grow. 」

「 As the god of martial arts, I wish for your martial arts to improve in that world, but do not force yourself. 」

「A moving scene, isn't it? 」

Unexpectedly, a light voice suppressing laughter was heard.

「 …. A Death god? I do not recall having called you. 」

The god of martial arts said with a sour expression.

「 It is not because of being called 」, said a thin man wearing a tailcoat, appearing behind Hifumi.

Wearing a faint smile, the pale faced, corpse-like thing spoke.

「 I have been watching him for a while. This fragrance of death he gives off is not human. 」 the Death god said and laughed.

「 Many people desire to kill, but this person is the first who's soul is wreathed in darkness. 」

Hifumi only silently glanced at the Death god, remaining expressionless. Listening to the Death god's words, neither affirming nor denying.

「 Do you crave for bloodletting? Now that you mention it, what is the source of your zeal for martial arts? 」

Hifumi didn't answer the god of martial arts' question.

「 Even the god of that world does not have such a happy thing! In that world of magic and swords, you can show your power to your heart's content! If anything stands before you, you can cut it down with your sword! 」

Excitedly, the Death god appeared in front of Hifumi.

「 Despite the poor ability, accept this gift from me! 」

The Death god grandly gestured towards Hifumi, a black mist permeated Hifumi's body.

「 I gave you the darkness attribute that I excel at, and you will be able to use dark magic depending on your image there, and it is at a level that exceeds human knowledge. 」

「 I will use it well. 」

「 You seem to have received it willingly. Naturally, it will not work here, but you should try it out in that world. 」

To Hifumi's words, the Death god replied smilingly, winking at the other two gods.

「 I thank you. 」

「 Eh? 」

Before the Death god realised, Hifumi's sword tore him into two pieces.

The upper body fell onto the floor, making a much heavier noise than expected.

The Death god, his eyes filled with astonishment, opened his mouth soundlessly before collapsing and turning into sand.

「 Huh, was the god really cut that easily? I don't know whether or not this person is a god. However, I don't like anyone trying to use me. 」

Hifumi stared expressionlessly at the sword which reflected nothing, not even the edge was nicked.

「 Thank you for this sword. I can use this to kill without reserve. 」

As if a switch had flipped, Hifumi muttered with a ferocious smile.

2. The Kill

It was not yet Zero-hour for the “Transfer”.

Previously it was God, now human beings will be killed.

「 What…. 」

Astonished at Hifumi’s sudden violence, the remaining two Gods were frozen in shock.

「 Though it seems like an abduction, I am exceedingly happy about it. 」

Hifumi said without meeting the two silent gods’ gazes.

「 For the very first time, a living person…. Whether a god can be called a living being is debatable…. I killed it. I feel very good. The desire to take a life increases as one walks the path of martial arts. The more one kills, the more their skill improves. A world of swords and magic? Demons exist. People that may deprive you of your life. One can say that a person’s life has more value in Japan. If I have a reason, I will kill. 」

There was no blood on the blade, but Hifumi shook the sword anyway.

From where the magical formation was touching, his feet were slowly becoming transparent.

「 Apparently this takes a while.. 」

「 But, do we allow this fellow to just go as he pleases? 」

The beard-stroking God seems to have settled down, but the God of martial arts hadn’t regained his cool.

「 Ah well, we have no way to do anything. 」

「 Although he killed a God,the transfer has begun, we just can’t do anything now. 」

While the Gods were conversing, Hifumi’s waist had started to disappear.

「 Hey Gods. 」

「 What? 」

「 We'll meet again. I will take many lives there, fill the world with fear. I will come back much stronger. First I will deal with the people that called me, forcibly ignoring my intentions. I dislike people who try to manipulate me. 」

Hifumi felt a very large power whirl through him.

The power to kill.

Feeling better, he breathed out slowly.

「 I will change that world according to my morals. Though it may be the dream of a fool….. I will ransack that world with my power, and find a way to get back, I'm sure I'll find something in that worthless world. 」

「 Eh, what?…. 」

「 Well then… 」

Leaving behind a smile that brought a chill to even the Gods spines, Hifumi disappeared from this world.

「 We may have unexpectedly sent off a terrible person…. 」

The moment when the transfer was completed, the unsheathed katana, pointed at a girl in front of Hifumi.

「 Eh…? 」

「 You, was I summoned? 」

Hifumi snarled, eyeing the girl coldly.

「 Eh? Eh….? 」

「 You bastard! What do you think you're doing! 」

With the girl clearly not understanding what had occurred, the Knights suddenly yelled angrily.

Contrasting to them, Hifumi was observing his surroundings icily.

The six Knights gradually enclosed Hifumi, nudging him with their spears.

「 Hiuuu…. 」

The girl finally noticed the katana pointed at her. Her expression changed from perplexed to frightened.

「 You are rude! Do you know whom you're speaking to?! 」

No.

「 Answer me. Did you summon me? 」

He replied, carelessly disregarding the spear-wielding Knight's angry words.

「 Uu… 」

「 Ah, speak slowly. If the blade slips carelessly, you will die. 」

「 Ugu… 」

Looking over the Knights and the girl expectantly, Hifumi got no answers. If the Knights step forward by only half a step, the sword will slip and the girl dies.

「 H-Hero sama….. It is I who have summoned you, it is not a mistake. 」

「 Who are you, what do you want from me? 」

「 I am the first princess of the Orsongrande Empire, Imeraria Torie Orsongrande… 」

Attempting to meet eyes with Hifumi but failing, she started stuttering due to fear.

「 O-Our country has become impoverished due to the brutal fight against the demi-humans….

So we reproduced this summoning magic according to the ancient texts….

Since it is a secret art that only a person of Royal blood can execute, since only those of the Royal bloodline are gifted with a large amount of mana, I was ordered to summon Hero-sama…. 」

I see, summoning a hero to fight against evil happens in the fantasy genre often. And thus…

「 Ordered to? Then, who is the initiator of this ritual? 」

「 Th-That is ….. 」

Princess Imeraria clearly saw the colour of anger in Hifumi's eyes, and was worried about telling him. But Hifumi could guess it easily.

「 It's the King, isn't it. Only someone above the rank of 1st princess can order you. Though it might be the Queen too. If they are your parents, it makes sense that you are carrying out this duty. 」

「 Ah…. 」

Imeraria opened her eyes wide and looked quite flustered.

The man in front of her eyes was not some hero fighting for some sense of justice, not caring for authority or power, but an extremely dangerous person.

「 N-No, its different! I… this.. 」

「 How old? 」

「 Eh? 」

「 Your age. 」

「 Ah, 14 years old ! 」

Puzzled momentarily by the question, she answered in a hurry.

「 Is that so… 」

Hifumi moved his sword away, just a little. In truth, he holds to some standards, one of them being "Upto junior high school level, the parents should take responsibility for their children's actions". Besides, "Criminals do not have human rights" and "Don't pay attention to religious fanatics and educators" are unsuitable for the laws and customs of Japan, because of which Hifumi had accumulated stress and impatience.

「 Then, the ones that should be killed are your parents, huh.. 」

「 Eh???… 」

At that instant, Hifumi turned and swung his katana.

The surprise attack aimed at a gap in the neck of the Knight's armour struck true, and the Knight collapsed, unable to make a sound, blood gushing from his neck.

「 Emitting bloodthirst so wildly, it's unpleasant, you know. Amateur. 」

Instantly, the katana returned to Imeraria's throat.

Exactly to the same place, as though it had not moved away at all.

With merely one slash, the Knights froze in shock, feeling weak at the knees.

Within this castle, the ones attending the ritual were the elite of the elite practitioners in the country. However, none of them were able to even see the sword's path.

Furthermore, they didn't even notice when the katana had left Imeraria's throat.

Watching Hifumi's swordsmanship, the Knights' shock increased. The swords and spears they use are heavily made and are used to cut using the weight and power.

Apart from the thin clothes Imeraria was wearing for the ritual, they didn't think Hifumi's thin katana could damage their armour. For Hifumi, it was common sense to aim at the vital points of an opponent on the battlefield, but due to the difference in cultures, they were unable to understand.

The dead knight's corpse proved that the ability that killed him was definitely that of a hero-level.

「 You bastard! 」

An enraged knight roars angrily, unable to step forward.

Comparatively, Hifumi was very calm.

「 Come forward if you want to die. I have business with this woman. 」

Hifumi calmly provoked them, lowering his katana.

At that instant, the five remaining knights charged together.

「 ….Diversion method 」

Hifumi muttered while turning his body to slide past a knight, using the knight's own momentum to move past him.

Another knight's spear stabbed into the knight that replaced the lightly moving Hifumi's position.

「 Guo…. Gaha 」

Though most of the damage is resisted by the armour, the spear pierced through the joints, the other's neck was split by Hifumi's katana.

The light left the eyes of knight whose movement was restrained by stabbing his colleague and he died.

Two people are instantly killed. To recover the situation, the remaining three knights took some distance.

「 Weak. 」

Hifumi spat in disgust.

「 Knights of the castle? I thought you'd be able to resist for longer than this. 」

「 Gugu….. 」

「 Had enough yet? 」

「 You bastard, you are nothing! 」

Their strength as Knights was dominated by Hifumi, no longer able to protect the princess.

Simultaneously piercing and stabbing, Hifumi passed by the three knights as though he was taking a light stroll.

The first knight had a spear protruding from his throat, the second had his spine slashed and the third was killed by Hifumi roundhouse kicking a knife into him, burying it upto the hilt. (TN: I dunno where the heck this knife came from)

「 Its over. 」

Hifumi declared disdainfully, turning the katana dripping with blood towards princess Imeraria again.

Imeraria, who had absolute confidence in the strength of the Imperial Knights watched as the Knights sank in a sea of blood in the blink of an eye. It was unbelievable.

「 Aa…. Auuu… 」

「 Now, shall I have you guide me to your parents? 」

Hifumi unconcernedly said, sheathing his sword after killing everyone.

Guided by the princess, he walked within the castle. Servants and knights stared at them from a distance, but none called out to them. Seeing the haggard princess and the young man, no one was able to understand the situation.

The room in which Hifumi was summoned, containing the corpses of the Knights had been locked when they left, and no one knew what had transpired there. Servants are not allowed access, they only know that some important things are done within that room.

A splendid building. Looks quite similar to images of castles of the West that I saw on the net before.

Hifumi gathered information by looking around while moving.

These servant-like fellows, are they wearing hemp clothes? Is the cultural level still that of the Middle Ages equivalent? Though Imeraria's clothes seem to be of fine make….

While walking, Hifumi suddenly decided to try out the Darkness magic attribute he received prior to the transfer. He predicted that the sense of incongruity within his body after the transfer might be mana. On letting an image float to his mind and concentrating the mana, something like black mist formed over his left hand.

So this is Dark magic….

Remembering a previously read novel, he solidified the image for the magic.

In front of him floated a black circle about 20 cm in diameter. Hifumi tried to insert his sword in it.

It seems possible to put it in…

Putting his right hand behind his back, Hifumi concentrated on the image and gripped the sword from the dark interior.

He could clearly feel the contours of the sword fit his hand.

Retrieval is possible even if I can't see it. Really, this shouldn't be able to be done.

While experimenting Hifumi walked on noiselessly, Imeraria timidly walking with heels clacking was putting her whirling thoughts in order.

Should I take him to the King?

Or should I take him to some other place after all?

Then what do I do after taking him elsewhere?

When he knows he's been deceived, then what?

Assuming I'll be killed, what then?

In the end, someone in the castle can seize him, but eventually might reach father's place after struggling.

「 Why do I have to do such a thing…..? 」

Imeraria muttered inaudibly, her quiet companion seems to have heard her.

「 Such a reason, only you will have the answer. 」

「 Eh? 」

Imeraria turned around instinctively on hearing that.

「 Whether you did something out of malice, or out of profit, whether someone was grateful for it or was wounded by it, none of that matters. The only fact is that there will be a consequence. 」

Another thought rose up in his mind.

「 All actions bounce back on oneself. In such a situation, the reason is insignificant, only actions matter. 」

While Hifumi's words disturbed princess Imeraria, they had arrived at the entrance of the throne room already.

The king, waiting impatiently for the hero's visit. Not knowing anything, a Knight received them smilingly.

「 Princess, this man…. 」

「 Yes, I will conduct introductions to father. Please open the door. 」

On reaching here, Imeraria had resolved on one thing.

Her words to the Knight, different from before had calmed down.

In the audience chamber, the King was sitting on a raised platform, with the Queen and Prince on his sides, with Knights and civil officials on both sides of the chamber.

Storing his katana in the Dark Hole, Hifumi casually followed Imeraria into the chamber.

5 metres in front of the king, Imeraria halted. Hifumi was standing behind her in a bad mood.

Some people raised their eyebrows due to Hifumi not kneeling, but he didn't care.

When Imeraria bowed, the King opened his mouth.

「 Imeraria, is this person a Hero? 」

But it was not the princess that answered.

「 Nope, I am not a Hero. 」

Hifumi said while looking the King in the eye.

「 I may be rude! I'll speak plainly! 」

An approximately 50 year old man seemingly a civil officer with a splendid moustache shouted, completely ignoring Hifumi.

「 This woman did the summoning, dragging out this pitiful victim

from a different world by force….. 」

Pulled out from the Dark Hole, the katana shone with an uncanny light.

「 This crime, make up for it with your life… 」

With a cold light in his eyes, Hifumi sneered.

3. Can't Repeat

After a short silence, the audience chamber was in utter chaos.

「 Why, within the presence of the King is he carrying a sword?? 」

「 In the King's presence! 」

「 What are the Imperial guards doing?? Quickly, arrest him! 」

The civil servants edge back, the Knights on standby move forward. Inside the castle there is basic equipment. Like the Knights in the summoning room, all these Knights have the same short spear.

「 Please wait! 」

Imeraria cried, standing in front of Hifumi with her diminutive body.

「 Hero-sama too, please hear my story. 」

「 ….. Go ahead 」

「 Thank you very much…. 」

On her words not being disregarded, Imeraria was relieved a little. However, thinking about the problem, she braced herself.

「 Wait, Imeraria. 」

Imeraria looked up on hearing the King's voice.

Though he was sitting on the throne in a relaxed manner, his countenance showed irritation.

「 First of all, speak with us. Hero, we are Wilburken Godenhaim Orsongrande, the King of this country. 」

(TN: I took some liberties with names, but tried to stay as close as possible to the original. Also, the King is using a form of 'me' that is typically used by royalty. Hence, the 'us')

Hifumi did not look away from Imeraria.

「 H-Hero sama? 」

「 I said I would listen to what you had to say. Say it quickly. 」

On seeing Hifumi's complete disregard for him, the King angrily struck the armrest of the throne.

「 Ignoring us! Even a Hero is not permitted to ignore us! Guards, arrest this fellow! It's fine if he's injured a little! 」

Four members of the guard charged forward at the Royal decree, all of them were cut down in a single breath. Without being flashy, a precise swing of the sword killed efficiently. Watching the elegance and cruelty, everyone in the audience hall held their breath.

「 Hero-sama 」

「 What? 」

「 Your name, please let us hear it. 」

「 ……. Hifumi. 」

Thinking a little, Hifumi answered with only his given name. His family name of Touno he might as well throw away. Killing the God, crossing over worlds, killing people.

Though there were no lingering attachments to his family, Hifumi had come alone, he may have wanted to persuade himself of that.

Hearing his name, Imeraria looked Hifumi in the eye and said

「 Hifumi-sama, due to our selfish convenience, you were called to this world. I sincerely apologise to you. Truly, I am very sorry. 」

The surrounding people murmured on seeing Imeraria bowing deeply.

A member of the royal family is bowing to a rude person. In this world, where status is fixed and hierarchical relationships are the norm, this is clearly the exception.

「 This situation, it is my fault. To calm Hifumi-sama's anger, I will do anything I can…. My life, you may end it right here if you wish. 」

Imeraria's blue-eyed gaze don't waver from Hifumi. Demonstrating resolution, she awaited his words quietly.

However, the King raised his voice.

「 Foolish! How could such a thing happen! Isn't this person a Hero? Imeraria, explain. 」

The King's voice shook with anger.

「 Why should the princess lower her head? What did the Knights taking part in the Ritual do? Just what is going on?! 」

「 ….. *Explanation* 」

From Imeraria's mouth, the reality of the situation shocked people in the hall.

Some Knights have already been murdered by the man called to save the country.

And most surprising, blaming the king with a crime, no, to say such a thing warrants punishment. Towards the King, a monarch, such a thing is unacceptable.

At least, according to the people in this world.

「 Hifumi, there is still time. Kneel to us and swear to serve this country. With your ability, you can obtain a high position. The rudeness here, and the crime, we will overlook it. 」

Though people were killed, it was a terrible remark, but from the reactions of the civil officials, the King's influence seems to hold much weight. With these impossibly favourable terms, the King looked down on Hifumi from the platform full of confidence.

However, to the abnormal man standing there, it was a bad move.

「 Foolish. 」

Hifumi spat and continued.

「 Astonishing. A man of power who is also a complete fool. Do you not understand that your daughter is desperately trying to protect you, do you not understand your position? You should be begging me. I and your daughter, who you want to use for this country. You tried to deprive a man of his future, for your own selfish interests. 」

「 Hi-Hifumi sama…. 」

Imeraria's fears were realised, the situation was going terribly bad.

However, it was too late.

Several Knights charged towards Hifumi, but were killed instantly. Hifumi had already reached the pinnacle of fighting one-handed. The civil servants unable to take in the violence back up against the walls, and some sit down in fear. Only the Prince and the Queen seem able to watch the situation without turning pale.

「 Th-Then how to say this? You cannot be returned to your former world, the way of repatriation is lost, only the Ritual of Summoning remains. 」

On hearing the King's words, Hifumi looked at Imeraria. She confirmed it by avoiding his gaze and looking down.

「 Everything is our fault. Therefore…. 」(Imeraria)

「 If a parent obediently apologises, consent to money. Of course, your wish of leaving will be heard. Becoming the likes of a subordinate is unreasonable. 」

「 Money, huh… 」

「 The princess herself does not have any assets. Because it is rare to buy anything with one's purse. 」

「 Of course, the country pays for this. 」

「 Wh-Why…. 」

「 The criminal is a King. The King's responsibility is the country's responsibility. That is how it is…. 」

Hifumi did not really want a lot of money. He wanted enough for immediate funds in this world. However, he was unable to accept the King's attitude and wanted to see the reaction of the King and specified an amount of money.

「 30 percent of this country's treasury. Ah, I will receive a formal apology, of course. This nation's King who messed up, you will publicize this event so that it is common knowledge. 」

「 That is…. 」

Understanding wells in Imeraria. Her father cannot accept these conditions.

Thought the amount of money mentioned is not a problem, but publicizing the King's blunder, with her father's character, will not be allowed because of the Royal family's dignity. Something like this is reason enough for abdication.

「 Heh… Are you stupid? I cannot accept such a reason. Take a better look at reality if you want to negotiate. 」

The King scoffed on listening to Hifumi's conditions.

At this late a stage, he did not give up his superiority.

「 Then, I will give you enough money to live easily for several years. You are somewhat talented, but a mad dog is not needed. On receiving the money, leave the castle immediately. 」

In order to show dignity to the vassals who are somewhat settling down, the King talked as though he had the upper hand. The King's authority is higher than anyone else, they reassured themselves of that while exchanging glances.

「 Until the end, he understands nothing. What a pathetic fellow. 」

Hifumi muttered to himself, with a sigh mixed in. How many people were able to hear it?

Though Imeraria heard him, before she understood, the next scene jumped into her eyes.

「 Die. 」

With silent footsteps, Hifumi draws near the King in an instant.

With a sound like cutting grass, the King's head was cut off.

「 Hiiii… 」

The head tumbled down onto the Queen’s lap, who was sitting to the side, she fainted in fear.

Similarly, the Prince fainted too.

「 H-How…. 」

「 Parents take responsibility for their child. In this case, the parents are the masterminds. Furthermore, the conditions were given, yet not met, his death was but natural. 」

Cleaning his blade with a kaishi[1], said Hifumi, without a trace of malice in his expression.

「 Regrettable. You always thought of your father first, but he was stupid. 」

「 B-But I took responsibility…. 」

To Imeraria's incoherent muttering, Hifumi continued,

「 You reflected. Did you follow what your father said after that? According to his own convenience, he tried to give reparations. So I killed him. 」

The vassals were already lost for words. Feeling fear and confusion, no one moved.

But one person, a younger Knight saw the princess burst into tears and ran towards Hifumi.

「 Don't think you can get away with this! 」

A man pulled out his sword and charged at Hifumi.

「 Slow. 」

Hifumi judged it unnecessary to pull out his katana, passed by the side of the Knight with a quick movement, scooped his opponent's chin and threw him to the stone floor.

During the audience, a carpet was spread only in the central passage, the young Knight was unlucky.

Fresh blood spread over the floor.

「 Look. 」

Told by Hifumi, Imeraria raised her head timidly.

A hellish sight filled her view.

Several corpses of Knights, her mother and brother, fainted on the platform.

And…..

「 All this is the result of the action your father took. All because of believing in that fool. 」

Hifumi looked at Imeraria.

「 The difference is, you reflected a little. 」

It was a really self-centred point of view, but no one said anything.

In a manner of speaking, a person who's been hurt takes revenge on the mastermind. According to the kingdom's laws, killing a kidnapper and escaping are natural rights, though Hifumi didn't know that.

Though criminals are privately put to death, it is a King that has been killed, the situation is too abnormal.

Imeraria was sitting down trying to organise her thoughts. Though unable to precisely understand the person in front of her, she carefully watched the situation.

「 Well now. 」

Hifumi looked around, a man stepped forward. It is well built man, around 50 years old.

Because he stood near the throne, he might be a high level person in this place.

「 You are? 」

「 …. This country's Prime Minister, Adel Fiore Vinya. 」

Hifumi stared expressionlessly at the man who was desperately trying to suppress his shaking knees.

「 Don't be afraid. If you don't harm me, I will not harm you. Apart from that, take me to the treasury of this castle. Immediately. 」

To Adel's doubtful expression, Hifumi declares lightly.

「 Reparations have been met. 」

Hifumi was led to the treasury by Adel, the soldiers on guard also entered, as asked by Adel.

Entering the treasury, there were silver and gold coins were piled up. Half of them were stored in the Dark Hole.

The promise was that of 30 percent, Adel looked at Hifumi in protest.

「 The promise was already broken. Though a life was lost, but such a life is unworthy. 」

Hifumi declared lightly.

Looking at the airy treasury, Adel had given up on the national administration in the future, was walking unsteadily towards the exit with Hifumi following. Imeraria, who was crying before in the throne room, appeared.

「 Hifumi-sama, please wait. 」

「 What? My business here is done. 」

「 First of all, this apology….. 」

Hifumi looks at Imeraria suspiciously.

The other party is a man that killed her father a moment ago. Logically speaking, it is hardly a thing to be able to simply forgive.

「 This time, I was foolish and unaware. Though it does not change what has already happened, without thinking about the repercussions, I did this. And now.. 」

Raising her head, Imeraria's face was expressionless, like a cool-headed statesman.

「 Our country Orsongrande does not forgive you, I will support mother and my younger brother and make this country strong. And in time, when we are unreliant on others, we will take revenge. 」

「 Fufu 」

Unable to bear it, Hifumi burst out laughing.

「 If you like, how about competing now? 」

「 No, the present military power of our country will not be able to stand against you. This even I understand. It is my responsibility to set it up. After that, I will have my revenge. 」

「 Is that so. Well then, I will look forward to that time…… 」

「 Thank you. Now please leave as soon as possible. The exit is there. 」

Hifumi started walking in the indicated direction.

Imeraria raised a hand, stopping the Knight approaching Hifumi from the back. She knew it was useless.

「 ….Have the Third Knight corps observe him until he leaves the country. Get me a detailed report. However, all attacks against him are prohibited. On leaving the country, the task goes to the Spy corps. 」

「 At once, princess. 」

Receiving Imeraria's orders, the Knight left.

「 Father, please forgive the weak me who cannot beat the enemy. Soon, one day….. 」

While watching Hifumi's back disappearing into the town, tears thought to have withered streamed down her cheeks.

In such a way, the God-killer, the man that killed a King, was released into the world.

- [1] kaishi = folded paper tucked inside a kimono.

4. More Than Words

Hifumi walked leisurely into the town, disappearing into the crowd. Leaving the castle, Hifumi passed by an area lined with very large mansions that seemed to belong to nobles, arriving at an area lined with 2-storey and 3-storey houses, various shops, stalls and some food carts.

An enticing smell wafts from the stall grilling and selling some kind of meat and fish.
In a shop storing large amounts of vegetables, common people are happily gossiping.
On a roadside table attached to a restaurant, some old men with pipes were discussing something.
Men and women of all ages came and went, voices of merchants resounded here and there, adding to the hustle and bustle.
The clothes varied, but could not be called beautiful. The clothing industry was quite possibly not too advanced, thought Hifumi.
Incidentally, Hifumi was clad in a martial arts uniform, a dark blue hakama, on his feet were a style of sneakers. Besides, some people were glancing at Hifumi, but he wasn't worried, since it was a habit to go for a stroll wearing his hakama in Japan.
Even though the King was incompetent, these fellows in town are quite well-built. That King was living quite extravagantly.

Taking a silver coin out of the Dark Hole, Hifumi bought some skewers from a stall. He was looked at unkindly for taking out a silver coin for skewers that cost 5 copper coins, but was presented with twice the skewers when he said the change was unnecessary.
As he ate while walking, he noticed a shop with a strange atmosphere.
He did not see any products on display, nothing special drawing him in. A black cloth was hanging over the entrance, and a stern faced man standing near it with folded arms.
Though there was a signboard, Hifumi could not read it.

Because he was interested, he decided to call out.
「 Oy… 」
「 Aa….. what? 」
Suddenly talked to, the man responded with his eyebrows raised.
「 What kind of shop is this? 」
「 It is written on the signboard. It is a slave shop and has nothing to do with a guy like you. 」

「 Nothing to do? Without even an introduction? 」
「 ….Such a thing, the cheapest of our slaves cost 50 gold coins, it is not an amount a youngster like you can pay. 」
Finishing his speech, the man turned his eyes to the street again.

A slave, huh…
Thinking about the future, while walking, Hifumi thought about it again.
Though I intended to travel around the world first…
In the previous events, he could not read the characters, did not understand the values of the coins, and realised that he did not have enough knowledge at all. Though he shopped at the stalls, he did not get the change, so he didn't know about the conversion rate. If he had a slave, he would be able to obtain that knowledge, and it would be convenient in the future. He had enough money, after all, he had half the contents of the castle treasury. Even if it was a somewhat high-class slave, it would be sufficient.
In case of betrayal, he would 'deal with the problem'.

「 A gold coin, like this? 」
Pulling out a gold coin from the Dark Hole, Hifumi threw it at the stern man.
「 Ah? …. Yes, but one or two coins…. 」
「 Put out your hands. 」
Hifumi grabbed the man's wrist and forced it upwards. He threw out approximately 30 gold coins from the storage into the hands of the man who was surprised at Hifumi's strength.
Though more than half spilled and scattered, Hifumi was unconcerned.
「 Huh?? 」
「 Thank you for telling me this so kindly, but I want to see the commodities, get it? 」
Dumbfounded, the man quickly picked up the gold coins, his attitude did a complete 180 and urged Hifumi inside the shop.
「 W-Wait here please! M-Masterrrr ! 」
The man disappeared into the depths of the shop, and another person came out.

Without letting Hifumi wait too long, a man dressed in subdued, yet high quality clothes received him.
「 I am sorry for keeping you waiting. I am this shop's manager. Dealing with the gatekeeper must have left a bad taste in your mouth….. 」
Although smiling, the man appraised Hifumi on seeing him.

「 Not a big deal. Though I heard it is possible to buy slaves here. 」
「 That is generous of you. This shop certainly trades in slaves. Honoured customer, shall we begin the slave purchasing? Of course, I can explain a little about this for a first-time buyer. 」
「 Ah, though embarrassing, I am from the countryside, so please explain everything. 」
「 Well then… 」
The manager explained concisely, holding to the main points.

- There are Crime slaves and Debt slaves, slaves sold for the sake of their families or villages called Realisation slaves.
- For Crime slaves, all of them belong to the country and are forced to work in the mines, etc, they are generally not sold.
- In general, there are only 2 kinds of slaves sold here : Debt and Realisation slaves.
- Though there are people who are kidnapped and enslaved, because there is a very high penalty for handling such slaves, most merchants don't deal in them.
- The slave's actions are limited by a tattoo imbued with special magic, it is impossible to rebel against the owner.
- Though slaves don't have rights, it is a crime to kill one without cause.

「 Is it necessary for there to be a reason? 」
「 I'm afraid so. Though the master or their family cannot harm the slave directly due to the limitation set into the tattoo, if the master's belonging is stolen, or if an associate of the master is harmed, it is not a crime. 」
「 Is there a need to prove it? 」
「 The master's testimony is enough. 」
Seeing that the law was full of holes, Hifumi sighed.
However, it is convenient.

Shutting his eyes and thinking for a while, he asked the manager
「 Is there a slave that meets my conditions now? Money is not an issue. 」
The manager takes out a sheaf of parchment from his breast pocket, dips a quill in ink from a nearby table, and waits for the next words.
「 Has to have enough strength, should be able to endure long travel, should be able to read and write. Also powerful enough to protect me in a fight. 」
Quickly scribbling the data, the manager suddenly looked up.
「 A man or a woman, which is preferred? 」

「 Either one is fine. The problem is ability. 」
「 Certainly. We will prepare it, please wait for a while. 」

The manager ushers Hifumi to the interior of the shop.
「 Here, the merchandise that meet your requirements. Please choose freely. 」
「 Talk to them? 」
「 Of course, no problem. 」
The room Hifumi was taken to was wide, and ten men and women lined up against the walls in handcuffs. Wearing simple, dirty tunics, they looked hesitatingly at Hifumi. What kind of person buys them, their fate is in that party's hands.
Hifumi imagined what he looked like in the eyes of the slaves. Hifumi hardly looked old enough to be earning money. Did he even look like a merchant, noble or well-to-do young man…. Recalling his appearance, he smiled wryly, realising that was not the case.

Suddenly, among the slaves that had lined up, two women next to each other caught Hifumi's eye.
One was of small build, height came upto Hifumi's neck, thin blue hair and emerald green eyes.
The other was almost the same height as Hifumi, had a tempered and hard body. She had reddish eyes and brown hair.

I saw it in town, hair and eyes like this are poles apart….. Both had well featured faces. Truly, an appearance such that a brothel owner will immediately buy them.

「 You and you. Name? 」
「 ….Origa 」
The smaller one answered in a fading voice. The brown haired one

did not answer.
Ignoring the audaciously staring brunette, Hifumi asked Origa.
「 Then, Origa, what can you do? 」
「 …. I can use wind and water magic. Besides…. 」
After hesitating a little, catching her breath, she continued jerkily
「 At night, can also keep company… 」
「 Origa! 」
To Origa's murmur, the brunette raised her voice.

「 To be bought by such a person! A perverted noble buying us, how unpleasant… 」

「 Such a thing! Do you not understand what kind of fellow this guy is? 」 (Manager)
The manager raised a whip he was holding and drew near, but Hifumi raised a hand to stop him.

The brunette seems to be called Kasha.
Hifumi admitted he did have a strange air about him. 18 year old Hifumi had a sexual desire like anyone else, and he did not dislike women.
Though currently, the satisfaction of depriving people of their lives suppressed his desires….
Not noticing the abnormality, Hifumi casually ran his eyes over Kasha's hands.
「 Kasha, is it. You use both hands to wield a saber. In addition, you can wield swords in both hands at the same time. 」
「 H-How… 」
「 Generally, I can understand the rough ability from the muscle movements of your palm, forefinger and thumb. 」(TN: Huh? How?)
Not just Kasha, but even Origa and the manager are at a loss for words.
「 Certainly, this Kasha uses swords in both hands, her ability as an adventurer is quite good. Origa worked alongside Kasha, her magical ability is quite high. Both of them have become Debt slaves due to a large sum of money. 」
The manager supplemented.
Origa and Kasha listened with unpleasant expressions.

Adventurer, huh…. Perhaps such an occupation exists in fantasy novels, forming parties whose task is subjugation and collection of demons and monsters. But in this world, what kind of occupation is this?

「 Okay. Now you two decide. 」
Hifumi's expression had a cold smile.
「 I plan to travel in the future. Physical strength is necessary, fights are very likely. If you can follow without betraying me, I promise a fun life. 」
「 What do you say? Being slaves to a fun life… 」
「 I will follow. 」
Origa answered Hifumi in a low voice. Her emerald green eyes stared firmly at him. A little frightened, her eyes shook with tears.

Man, I've been scaring women since I came here.

Turning a blind eye to his faults, he wondered (What should I do about Kasha?)

Kasha trembled.
Why is this man doing such an incomprehensible thing?
Why is Origa following this fellow?
She looked at the man in front of her.
Though he is smiling, her spine freezes.
This guy is dangerous. Her instinct sounds an alarm, this guy won't hesitate to jump into dangerous things. Rather than that, the darkness in the depths of his eyes brings anxiety to Kasha's heart.
However, Kasha had no choice when it came to Origa.
「 ….Understood. Though I do not understand how, I want you to take me with Origa…. 」
Kasha said, clapping her hands together towards Hifumi.
「 It is decided! 」(Manager)

Though Hifumi did not quite understand the mechanism of the tattoo, he smeared some blood on the tattoos on Origa and Kasha's shoulders, completing the contract.
The amount of money paid for both of them was 600 gold coins. Paying the full amount in cash surprised the manager, Origa et al, but it was more surprising that the customer was a user of the rare Dark magic.
「 An extremely mysterious person. Though it is obvious that he is from a far off place based on his clothes….. 」
At first, the manager was trying to analyse Hifumi, but now treated him like a guest of honour, as evidenced by the tea and sweets in the drawing room.
Behind Hifumi who was sitting on the sofa, Kasha and Origa stood with their handcuffs removed, both wearing simple tunics.
「 This was good business. By all means, please visit our sho again when more slaves are needed. 」

「 Ah, I too was able to do some good shopping. 」
Wrapping the sweets in a cloth, Hifumi left the shop with his slaves.

Greeted by the hustle an bustle of the city, Hifumi looked up at the sun. If morning and night were the same in this world, it would be noon.
「 I'm hungry. 」
Time flew during his morning practice, and he had only eaten a snack at the stall. He wanted a proper meal.
「 Do you know any place that serves good food? 」
「 In that case, there is a good store where I went a little…. There it is. 」
Kasha answered Hifumi's question.
「 It is not necessary to force yourself to use honorifics. 」
Hifumi says with a calm smile, different from a while ago.
Though he has an arrogant and self-centred standard that inconveniences others, he is kind to his family. If someone is not an enemy, he treats them humanely.
「 Then, let us try out the recommended shop. Ah, that's right…. 」
Neither Origa nor Kasha understood what he said, he continued,

「 I am being chased by this kingdom's royalty, we need to leave. 」

5. True colours

The shop that Kasha recommended,

'The Crude Dancer' was on a side road joining the main street.
Restaurant during the day, seemed to become a pub at night.
Since Hifumi could not read, Kasha made a suitable order of a meat dish and salad.
After waiting for about 10 minutes, what came over was a platter of fresh vegetables and a meat dish that looked like lamb chops cooked in tomato-like sauce.
「 Quite delicious. You seem to know some good shops. 」
Stuffing food in his mouth, Hifumi nodded at Kasha and Origa sitting opposite him. Both of them were eating a stew-like dish with bread.
「 Right? Though there aren't too many people here, the food is good… 」 (Kasha)
「 Don't make noise while eating. It's bad manners. 」
Like in the previous world, there were forks and knives, the food was delicious, though its origin was unknown. Hifumi was secretly relieved that the meals in this world were suitable.
As it is, sitting with slaves to eat a meal is considered extremely degrading, whats more, giving the slaves rough cereals while sitting on the floor was the norm. But Hifumi made the two sit side by side and order whatever they wanted.
Hifumi didn't care about custom, and stood by his own standards.
「 Gu…. Anyway, before, the explanation about that thing? 」
「 What thing? 」
Looking around and confirming that no one was nearby, Kasha asked
「 Being chased by the royal family, just what did you do…. 」
「 Ah, I killed some Knights and cut the King's head off. A while ago. 」

From the very beginning, Hifumi had no intention of concealing or deceiving his origin and events in the castle.
He followed his own path, causing trouble and danger, so the result of his choices was natural. Moreover, he had decided that he would not be bound to anything in the future, and would live freely, according to his own wishes.

Ah well, it appears as though my strength can cut down and confront any obstacles.

Seems like I can wander about enjoying life…

Being told about the tragedy in the castle as though unimportant, Kasha and Origa lost their appetites.
They were in doubt but asked when they saw Hifumi continue with his meal.
「 Is that fine? 」
Origa asked timidly.
「 Though I don't doubt it, if the story is true, then Knights and soldiers will soon be coming after us…. 」
「 Before that, I left the castle. 」
While drinking the tea that came after the meal, Hifumi turned his gaze to a table a little away from them. Two men who came in after Hifumi were eating while talking about something.
「 From the castle, the princess sent me out. That guy should understand that he is no match for me, a Knight. Simply chasing, not arresting or killing, he is lucky to just be observed. 」

Hifumi calmly rose from his table, walking over to the duo's table, he affably said.
「 Good work, guys. 」
「 Wh-What do you… 」
The men were extremely surprised, backing away a little.
Quickly sitting down on the newly-vacated space, Hifumi says with a smile,
「 We met at he castle a while ago. Observation duties, is it. 」
To Hifumi's words, the men held their breath.
「 Though I am not good at remembering faces, I'm good at remembering bodies. 」

(TN: *holds head* …. We even had a serious mood going…)

Hifumi tapped the table with his forefinger while saying lines that could be heavily misunderstood.
According to Hifumi, the two men were Knights who happened to be present at the killing site. The two people who survived, were disguised as ordinary people and were observing Hifumi.

Their instructions were simple: Observe and report. They were ordered not to raise a hand, no matter what. On being contacted by their observation target, they were covered with a cold sweat, why, they did not know.

「 Ah well, it is impossible for those employed in the castle to do this kind of espionage work. This should be left to the professionals.

There is still a long way to go for the sweet oujousama. 」

Actually this was a big misunderstanding. The third Knights corps, to which the two men belonged, only gathered intelligence within the castle and within range of the general citizen's districts, for this reason, events within the castle are taken care of.
Both men were experienced intelligence officers and did not think they would be seen through easily without their full-body armours.

「 You don't need to be nervous. If you are not hostile to me, I don't particularly mind. The princess' earnestness has been conveyed. 」
On hearing that their enemy had no intention of attacking, both men were relieved.
「 I am not a heinous person, nor a serial killer. I don't kill people randomly, be relieved. 」

Even if you are not a scoundrel, aren't you the bad guy here!

Holding down a tsukkomi the two Knights dropped their gazes to the table, like children being scolded.

「 Anyway, the other people are unacceptable. I have not seen those guys, nevertheless I can feel their killing intent towards me, unlike you. 」
「 W-Wait, other guys? Even though the observers today are supposed to be just us…. 」
Hifumi saw through the princess' subordinates completely, figuring out the country's intelligence level.

「 A different team, I guess. Unlike you fellows that followed me from the castle, those guys followed me from the slave shop. 」

Shocked at having been noticed since the beginning, leaving that aside, in front of them was an absolutely untouchable man, attempting something would be a big problem. Though the events within the castle had not been leaked due to the gag order, but if the incident was to be reproduced in the town….. just imagining it is frightening.
Besides, it would be a problem if people of the castle were concerned. If the retaliation went to the Royalty, the future of the country would be in doubt.

「 Gordon, tell the commander the situation immediately, and call support. 」

「 R-Roger! Excuse me! 」

Receiving the short instructions from his superior, the young man unconsciously lowered his head towards Hifumi and ran off. The remaining man's face was bitter.
「 Ah, work hard. I will do what I must. 」
Returning to his seat, Hifumi's threatening words went unheard.

Sitting down at his former seat, Hifumi drank the lukewarm black tea in a gulp.
「 …. We heard it 」
Hearing Kasha's words, Hifumi caught her reproachful gaze with a smile.
「 Ah, is that so. It looks like things will be fun in the future. 」
「 Fun? 」
「 I can kill anyone that points their weapon at me. Won't that be fun. Like hell I'm not gonna cause trouble! 」
The excitement in Hifumi's heart was clearly visible to everyone, like the expression of a child on a picnic.

「 Master, we were chosen among slaves who can fight. Is it that we were bought for the sake of protecting master's body? 」
To Origa's question, Hifumi shook his head.

「 I specified that they should be able to fight to protect themselves. It is a waste to let someone else kill my prey. 」

According to Hifumi's policy, anyone who attacks him, commits a crime in front of him, will be killed.He will kill, but…..rationally. He will persist to that standard.

「 Then, for what were we bought for? Though we have to travel, just master's strength alone, it shouldn't be a problem? 」

「 I told you I was from another world right? I know nothing about this world. I haven't even seen the land outside this city, much less other countries. Even the values of gold and silver coins is mystery to me. 」

So, Hifumi continued,
「 I want a companion in this world to explain that. A slave was the simplest solution because betrayal is not an option. 」

「 Why us? 」
Hifumi grinned.

「 You two seemed to be the strongest among that lot. Two people, backing each other up is better in a fight. How sad that I am chased, so that there are more chances to fight. As such, teamwork increases the possibility of surviving greatly. 」

To Hifumi's excitement at any imminent battles, the two slaves cannot help but be nervous.

「 We understand that fighting is necessary. However, as we are now, we do not have any weapons. Master, please understand the situation… 」(Kasha)
「 Understood. After this, we will go to buy equipment. Young girls can't wear these clothes indefinitely. 」
「 …….Thank you very much… 」(Origa)

Kasha was uneasy when Origa blushed. Unaware, Origa was getting accustomed to this different existence Hifumi.

「 Be that as it may, 」
Hifumi soliloquised sighing.
「 It is I who is the victim. 」
「 The fellow who debates over lives like this, who is the victim! 」
To Kasha's tsukkomi, the Knight sitting nearby reflexively gave a thumbs up.

「 Umu…. 」
「 Master, is something wrong? 」
Leaving the store, Origa asked doubtfully on hearing Hifumi groan.
With glossy eyes and white skin, resembling a doll, Hifumi said
「 The number of those guys letting out bloodthirst wildly has doubled, maybe about 10 of them. 」

Surprisingly impatient, he said delightfully.
「 Eh, then….. 」
The weaponless Kasha looked around uneasily.
「 For the time being, we can reel them in. You will observe how I kill. Oi! 」
Hifumi beckoned to the previously concealed Knight, who reluctantly approached. The pride of the Intelligence force is already tattered.

「 Prohibited from attacking, yet carrying weapons? Sorry, but can you do something? 」(TN: I'm quite sure I botched the second part of this line.)

Though a sudden request, when the Knight realised that the group outside meant nothing to Hifumi, he agreed.
「 Name? 」
「 …..Midas. 」
「 Then, Midas, do you know of any blind alleys nearby? 」

Guided by Midas for about 15 minutes, the noise of the store street changed and the scenery shifted to a quiet residential street.
The stonework of the buildings differed from the street of shops, the 3-storey and 4-storey buildings increased. The castle town has a large population, the housing complexes may increase.
The street being dim, naturally the crowd is scarce. Similar to a commercial district, the ground is paved with stone, though the surface is rougher.

「 Here. 」

Midas urged while prompting, 10 metres ahead was the building wall culminating in a dead end.
At that moment, a sound was heard cutting through the air.

The arrow that came flying, was knocked down by Hifumi's katana.
Using the night, the arrow was painted black, it's tip wet.

「 At last, you appear. 」

With Midas and the other two ahead of him, Hifumi saw the people who entered the alley from the back.
There are nine people. Though all members seemed to be wearing civilian clothes, their eyes are bitter.
The street is really narrow, only the two in front charge forward.
Holding black knives, without a single word, they mutually understand each other only with glances.

They seem experienced. They don't seem to be mere hooligans after money.

Guessing that the opponents were professionals, Hifumi asked himself why he was inadvertently glad. In his original world, he would not be interested in the fight, but here, he felt that some kind of restraint had come off.
But it's not an unpleasant feeling.
Or rather, with the exception of occasional brawls and matches, Hifumi's true character held in check, by fighting here, has most likely surfaced in this world.

Casually swatting the approaching knife-wielding hand to the side, it ended up in the other man's chest, as though planned from the beginning.
The man released the knife in surprise and promptly had his arm joints broken. Thrown to the ground face-first, his skull broke on the pavement.
Though two people instantly died, the next assassin approached without flinching.
Calmly pulling out his katana, Hifumi slit the wrist of the man in front, and continuing on, cut his throat.
Ignoring the man spraying blood from his throat, Hifumi crushed the next man's toes with his heel, his katana piercing through the staggered man's chest.
Hifumi rammed the chest of an opponent coming from the side with his shoulder, passed by while piercing his heart.

「 There are four people remaining. 」
Languidly lowering the blade soaked in blood, the murderous demon laughed.
「 Come quickly. I want to kill. 」

6. Closer to the edge.

Hifumi did not like flashy movements and skills. Large movements are done if necessary, as a pretence of high-handedness, but ultimately, to kill a person aiming at the vital spots is just as important. Stimulating the sense of pain by using a kansetsu waza (joint locking technique in judo) and ‘destroying’ the opponent in a move, killing can be done efficiently. Though there were no opportunities to use them in the other world, those points on the body had been memorised.

Though ‘Killing efficiently’ is very important, showing it to someone is unnecessary.
However, polishing the technique like this had an entrancing allure about it, even though it gave off a dangerous feel.

「 Wow… 」
Origa, who saw Hifumi’s technique for the first time, even though an adventurer, had never seen such an admirable skill.

「 Certainly amazing, but this….. 」
Kasha, breaking down and digesting the battle, as expected of a swordswoman, noticed Hifumi’s techniques designed to kill efficiently.

「 Master, just what kind of person are you…. 」

There is a reason that Kasha feels a sense of incongruity in Hifumi’s skill.
In this world, there are crime and war-related killings everywhere, but fighting with a demon is more familiar. There are various types of demons, their vital points similar to animals , blows and slashes do not have much effect.

There are attacks assisted by magic, fighting with the weapons of this world places emphasis on the point of contact(of the weapon) to drive in a strong shock or slash. As a result, maces or longswords are all made heavy and sharp, and weapons like the short spears equipped by the Knights of the castle are fewer.

Though bows exist as well, they are mainly used to hunt, and fire the first few volleys of arrows in an infantry battle, after which they are not used.

To kill a living thing here, forge the body, acquire power and use heavy weapons, strengthen the basic foundations. ‘Killing efficiently’ techniques never evolved in this world.

In such a world, Hifumi’s techniques are alien, unknown.

We seem to have been bought by an unexpectedly dangerous man.

To be frank, Hifumi had a height of about 170cm, small for a male to be employed in combat in this world. Because of his not being muscular, Kasha was half in doubt about her master’s fighting power. Events in the castle were thought to be considerably exaggerated.
However, seeing the slaughter carried out in front of their eyes, it seemed that the story of the man who bought them was not an exaggeration at all. Sitting with slaves, and having meals at the same level, this relaxed man seemed to be truly terrifying inside.

Though Kasha had fought many men in her adventurer years, this scary Hifumi was something else entirely. Though scary, she had to keep an eye on him.

This, dangerous and focused feeling from the sword…

While thinking such, fear was reflected in Kasha’s pupils. Though there was a feeling of respect for a strong person as well.

Two people of the four remaining enemies throw small knives. Matching their timing, the other two thrust forward.
「 Hoh… 」
Exhaling, Hifumi thrust his left hand forward, hitting one man’s torso and bringing him down, while doing so, the two knives struck his back. Convulsing once, the fellow collapsed powerlessly.
Slipping under the other approaching attacker, Hifumi savagely threw knives at the remaining two attackers.
Towards the abruptly approaching Hifumi, the men blocked with their own knives, but they were just too unlucky.
As though gliding, the katana cut lopped off the first person’s head, continuing on, sliced through the second person’s carotid artery.
Moving the katana back, approaching the previously disregarded opponent, the katana point soundlessly pierced through the centre of the torso.
Snatching the knife from the dead opponent’s hand, Hifumi threw it with a quick snap of his elbow. The knife flew a frightening speed striking the hiding and watching 10th man, entering his eye and

exiting from the back of his head.

「 I knew there were 10 people. 」

Mere seconds after encountering Hifumi, they were all dead.

「 Fuu… That was truly enjoyable. My thanks. 」

Hifumi said smilingly to the piles of corpses.

「 Ah, dammit 」

Looking at the state of his uniform stained with blood, Hifumi cursed while sheathing his katana.

「 All members are dead. Well, lets see who instigated them. 」

「 May I investigate as a member of the Knights? To be honest, we Knights are somewhat uneasy about the real nature of these people. 」 (Midas)

To Midas' proposal, Hifumi had a cold expression.
「 Like that, carefully erasing evidence of any links to your Knight Corps….. is that it? 」

「 W-Wait please! Really people like these do not exist in our Knight Corps, we know the dangers of starting a fight with Hero-sama! 」

Abruptly coerced, Midas instinctively panicked.
「 Fuu…. All right. In any case, I don't really want to spend time investigating. Do as you like. 」
「 Th-Thank you. 」

Leaving Midas waiting for assistance, Hifumi and company returned to the shop area.
Is my observation okay? Well, no worries.

「 Well, now that the enjoyable event is over, we should schedule shopping as next on the list. 」

「 Ne, ne 」
While walking, Kasha called out.

「 What? 」

「 Some time ago, master's fighting methods, I saw something like

that for the first time. Where in the world did master learn that? 」

「 Ah…. That, huh. In my hometown, such a way of fighting is not unusual. Like me, in the country where I was born and grew up, there were not a lot of people with heavily built physiques. Nevertheless, a certain period of fighting divided the country into pieces, and it was from such an environment that the gaps in power can be overcome by technique. Even if a person wears armour, they can be efficiently killed. 」

「 Power gap by technique…. 」
Thinking about something, Origa ponders.

「 On the battlefield, on killing an enemy it was a custom to harvest the heads. Also there were various other techniques used to destroy an opponent's mental balance. 」 (Hifumi)

「 H-Heads? 」

A frightening image seemed to float in front of Origa and Kasha, Hifumi didn't particularly feel like correcting them.

「 Indeed. The heads of the enemies were tied around the waist of the general, to show off their military exploits. 」
While discussing the finer points of old battles, Hifumi walked onwards, accompanied by two slaves who seemed slightly green-faced.

They reached the armourer's shop at last, near the shop they had eaten in. Like a convenience store, it was completely crammed with various equipment.
Further in, there seems to be a workshop attached, it's entrance covered by a screen of sorts. This too seems to be a shop that Kasha is acquainted with.

「 If it's here, weapons can be made, armour too. Though not their area of expertise, there is equipment for magicians as well. 」

The elation from shopping aside, Kasha was quite tense.
Inside the shop,a short elderly man was sitting next to the screen wearing an unpleasant expression.

「 You two huh. 」

The old man looked at Kasha and Origa with a sullen expression.

「 I look away from you, and you're slaves. 」
Looking at the tattoos on their shoulders, the old man says with a sigh.

「 Aa, there were a number of reasons. Right now, this man is the master. Master, this is the owner of the shop, Thorn of the Dwarf race. 」

Introduced by Kasha, the old man turned his scowl to Hifumi.

Ooh, this fellow is a dwarf? It's my first time seeing the real thing!

Meeting a fantasy race for the first time, Hifumi was excited.
Then, a question arose in his mind.

「 Huh? Weren't humans and demi-humans hostile to each other? 」

「 Fuun, a brat that knows nothing. The humans are quarrelling with the beast race. Us dwarves are scattered throughout the world, polishing our skills, and elves don't come out of their territories in the first place. 」

「 Is that so. Not complex at all. 」

Though Thorn was scowling throughout the explanation, his face might originally be like that.

「 Well, aside from the Demon race, the beast people and humans are the only sources of revenue for weapons. 」

They seem to be a business-minded race.

「 You know the weapons suited for yourselves. Do not mind the amount of money, you like it, buy it. 」

Telling them to promptly choose their weapons, Hifumi says magnanimously. Actually, a lot of money remains.

「 Is that fine? Slaves are usually not allowed to carry weapons, and if they are, usually cheap ones. 」
After having joy fill her face for an instant, Origa asked uneasily.

「 Will you be able to fight if not wielding weapons? Though the cost is trivial, you should choose an easy to use and durable weapon. It is necessary to avoid the possibility of the weapons

breaking in combat. 」

Next to Hifumi, Kasha nodded with an ‘un un’. (TL: I dunno how else to phrase this.)

「 It is as master says. As expected, master understands. So, I can choose without reservation. Now Origa, you need to chose a staff. Using magic without it is not possible, how will you fight? 」

Hifumi heard Kasha’s words.

Magic cannot be used without a staff? Is this the general practice of this world? Though I can use my Dark Magic normally without one….

However, neither the slave-shop owner nor the doorkeeper had any different reaction when I used it to bring out the money. Though it may be a peculiarity of Origa, various staffs on display are embedded with crystals and jewels, why they are used is unknown.

Still, I need to know more about this world.
Looking at the various products, Hifumi reaffirmed once again that he was really in a different world.

「 Origa does not look good in this. 」

「 Kasha’s arms and legs are long, many dresses suit you very well. 」

Though the conversation started resembling one that would not be out of place in a clothing store, Hifumi decided to ignore it.

It would be troublesome for Hifumi if he got entangled in women’s shopping.

「 Nevertheless, Knife, one-handed sword, two-handed sword, axe, mace, there are only 5 kinds. Full body leather armour differs from it’s metal counterpart only in hardness. 」

To Hifumi’s grumbling, Thorn retorts,
「 What are you saying. It is dangerous if defence is not tightened, yes? Besides, the only weapons not here are the spears used by the Knights. 」

It seems that leather armour is the norm here, metal armour is primarily used by officials and other ranking people, and there are truly very few varieties of weapons.

「 For instance, can I order some custom work? There is something I want you to make. 」
At first trying to explain with words and failing, because it is not possible to understand it that easily, finally parchment and ink was prepared and some drawings were made.

「 Because this and this are weapons, forge this properly. Also, this moves like this, do not make it fixed…. 」
「 What kind of weapon is this? I'm seeing such a thing for the first time, how to use it? 」
「 Aa….. Words won't suffice to explain, it's better if I show you. 」

Hifumi handed over about 20 gold coins to Thorn who was constantly tilting his head.
「 The advance. The rest will be paid upon completion. 」
「 Well, if I can earn money, I'll make it. Lets see…… 3 days, it will be done. 」
As expected of a dwarf, the work speed was upto Hifumi's satisfaction.
During their discussion, it seems that Origa and Kasha were finished with their selections.

「 Have you decided? 」
「 Yes, though it seems to cost a lot of money, is it fine? 」
Hifumi laughed cheerfully at the two who had an apologetic air.
「 It's allright, there is still plenty more money I took from the castle. 」

「 ….Is that really allright? 」
Though Kasha twisted uneasily for a different reason, she asked Hifumi directly for two one-handed swords and metallic armour.
Beneath the armour were simple clothes.
Origa chose a robe that snugly wrapped around her small body, and a staff with a tip embedded with a stone of the same emerald green colour as her eyes.
In all 22 gold coins. Half of it was the cost of the magic staff.

「 I'm sorry… 」
To Origa who was feeling like a burden, Hifumi paid while telling her it was fine.

「 Master is not buying anything? Even though master's clothes are uncommon, it is dangerous without a leather armour at least… 」 (Kasha)
「 Oh? Worried about me? 」

「 Wh-What is master saying… 」 (Kasha)

On Hifumi teasing her, Kasha blushed and looked down. It seems like she has no experience in banter like this.
Since her face and figure are easy on the eye, seeing as the Adventurer profession is mainly a man's, her pure reactions are quite strange.

「 Armour is unnecessary because it is heavy. As for a weapon, there's this. 」
Hifumi said as he touched the katana at his waist.
「 However, I just placed an order for a weapon. 」
「 ! Is it a weapon from master's world? 」
Origa jumped into the conversation.

「 Are you interested? 」
「 Yes. Just some time ago, master fought using an unknown technique. If possible, I would like to learn that technique. 」
Origa looked at Hifumi frankly and asked.
「 Is that so. 」

Hifumi had practised in not just Japanese martial arts, but also overseas martial arts for many years, he was glad to be asked to teach it.

「 I, I want to learn as well! 」
On Kasha declaring her participation in a hurry, Hifumi was in a good mood.

「 Yosh, if that is the case, then display your abilities once. After seeing that, I will guide you. Origa is a magician, yes? Do you do close combat? 」

「 I could only fight with magic till now. But, I got into this situation, and I regret not learning it…. 」
「 Origa…. 」 (Kasha)

Though Hifumi noticed that it was related to how she became a slave, he decided not to broach the topic.
「 There is a rule. My guidance is severe, resolve yourself. 」
「 Yes, thank you very much. 」 (Origa)
「 Master, a little….. No, please go easy on us. 」 (Kasha)
Following Hifumi who was feeling quite good, Origa and Kasha followed wearing their newly-purchased equipment.

Leaving the store in high spirits, the daylight had started fading.
A lot of time seems to have passed while Hifumi and the other two were on a shopping spree. Absorbed in the selection and discussion of equipment, all tension had fallen from them.
「 ….. For now, a hotel. 」
「 ….. Yes. 」
Hifumi’s guidance would start the next day.

7. Warning

In the residential area neighbouring the shopping area, they were able to get a room safely. Though not a high-class hotel, neither was it a hotel that the poorest segment of the population uses. Adventurers and peddlers seem to frequent it.

「 Since I cannot sleep with another person nearby, you two will be in another room. 」

There are no hotels that are cheaper for slaves, some allow camping out in the stables, but since there is the matter of meals and equipment, the two slaves accepted.
Since they were wearing tidy equipment, the slave tattoo was not visible, so the landlady did not say anything either.

「 Put your luggage away and gather in the dining room. 」

While Hifumi paid the landlady the lodging expenses of the three, the two went up to the upper rooms quickly.

「 Good grief, he's not gentle, nor somewhat concerned. 」 (Origa)

「 Perhaps he is not interested. As far as master is concerned, a man is either an enemy or not one, does he find anyone other than an opponent interesting? 」

To Origa's muttering at Hifumi, Kasha tilted her head.
「 Though he seemed to talk to Thorn from the weapon shop quite easily. 」 (Kasha)

「 That, I think it was because of the topic of weapons. 」 (Origa)
Origa's words were somewhat dissatisfied.

The hotel in which Hifumi stayed, 'Matthew Peak' had the dining room on the first floor, and the guest rooms on the second. It is not very big, and has only two kinds of rooms, single and twin. Once Hifumi confirmed that there was no one inside his room, he stepped inside and looked around. The window was not of glass, it was a simple wooden one. Recalling from memory, none of the shops had any glass, though there was some in the castle lighting. It seems to be a high-quality article.
Worn out bedding spread out over a simple single bed, with a wooden pitcher and cup on a small shelf next to the bed. Other than

that, no other furniture.

Storing his katana in the Dark Hole, Hifumi removed his equipment. He sat on the bed and started planning.

First off, I need to sort things out before leaving this town.
After the meal, Origa and Kasha should be asked, if they don't know, it will be necessary to investigate tomorrow.
Value of gold and silver coins, about Magic, about Adventurers, about demons, about this country, about this world…..
There are a lot of unknowns, and because of preparations to travel, it is necessary to think about it. How to travel in this world? There cannot possibly be trains and cars, so by foot or a wagon? It seems that travelling between relay stations while fighting demons is likely.

When Hifumi descended to the dining room, Origa and Kasha were already seated. Their food was ready, but still untouched.
Hifumi smiled wryly at the dutiful slaves, sat down and began to eat the prepared food.
Today's menu: stew mixed with vegetables and meat, along with a potato salad.
「 I'm getting used to the food here. Though the taste is a little thin, it's delicious enough. 」

「 This is thin…… Master must have been born in a rich family. 」

From the conversation during the meal, it seems that salt and sugar, etc are not very easy to obtain. Especially so for the castle-town they were in, it took ten days or more for the wagons to come in from the sea.

「 Aa, after the meal, I am coming to you room. 」
To this casually delivered sentence, Origa and Kasha react with a twitch.

「 That is…. 」
「 Understood. 」
Though Kasha started to say something, Origa interrupted with an acknowledgement.

The double room which Origa and Kasha were using, it was simply double the size of the single room and had two beds and shelves. Hifumi sat on one bed, and the two sat opposite him with their arms folded and listening hesitantly.

Suddenly, Kasha lowered herself to the floor and bowed deeply.
「 I have a request. 」

「 So suddenly? Changing your way of speaking, that's disturbing. 」

「 Di-Disturbing…… Um, please do not lay a hand on Origa… is my request. I will take her place. 」

「 Kasha?! 」
At this unexpected incident, Origa opened her eyes wide in surprise.

「 Origa, that… her body is not so strong, that sort of thing is too early. 」
「 ….Ah. 」

Looking at Kasha's deeply flushed face and her hurried words, Hifumi understood her explanation and laughed.

「 D-Don't laugh… Please. When I was bought, I was prepared for such a thing…. 」
「 Kasha, me as well. 」
Origa lowered herself next to Kasha and lowered her head towards Hifumi.

「 Master, I understand my position since I was also bought by master. Therefore… 」

「 Wait a minute. Don't just advance your delusions by yourselves. 」

Hifumi snorted, ordering the two to sit on the bed as before.
「 Don't misunderstand. I haven't particularly thought of sleeping with you. 」
「 B-But purchasing us, two women as slaves…. 」

「 Ah, that kind of implication can't be helped. For now, because Kasha and Origa are beautiful women, that kind of thinking was to be expected. That is not my purpose. 」

On being called beautiful women, both women looked down with reddened faces. Origa's gesture was lovely, Kasha's ears were red. Their aura of Adventurers completely dissolved, becoming that of young women instantly.

「 I do not wish to sleep with an unknown companion, I would

rather do so with a consenting partner. Using a situation to do this is something I absolutely dislike. 」
The mental strain suddenly released, Kasha gaped at him with her mouth open.

Therefore, Hifumi did not intend to treat them like slaves, he continued,

「 Today, my feeling of slaughtering was completely satisfied. In the first place, I don't feel the need to sleep with a woman. 」

To these words, Origa and Kasha were shocked.

After waiting for the two to calm down, Hifumi began his knowledge gathering.
– The various coins are gold, silver and copper. One Gold coin is 100 Silver coins, and one Silver is 100 Copper coins.
– The demons are of two types, the Beast type and the Undead type. The Beast type has particular disposition to the ferocity of animals. The Undead type has Zombies or Ghosts. Due to the territorial nature of the predatory Demon-kin, the chances of encounters rise on leaving towns and highways.
– Magic has the Fire, Water, Wind, Earth, Light, Dark attributes. Though there are many who can practice magic, especially due to systematisation, the usage seems to differ based on the image of the individual, and the teaching of the master. Generally, the magic and image are brought together by the staff, but a skilled person can, with practice use magic without the staff.
– This country, Orsongrande is the largest human-ruled highly-populated country, but young men are conscripted from the rural areas, the humans unreasonable parts emerge.
– The Adventurer refers to a person registered to a 'Guild' where a branch exists in each city, and their jobs involve demon subjugation, arrests etc and receive rewards for it. Kasha had registered along with Origa with a guild in this castle-town for two years as active Adventurers till the day of their mistake.

「 Guilds, huh? Then do other kinds exist, like merchant guilds? 」

「 Though there are service offices, as far as I know, other than Adventurer guilds, there are none others. 」 (Kasha)

Apparently all guilds of this world seem to be concentrated on combat related requests, there are no workforce like agencies. Though requests from the country may be received, they

are not sent to war. It seems to stick to the stance that whatever the work, payment matters the most.

「 Because of that, there are no conflicts with the nobles in the country. 」
「 Requesting an Adventurer is more inexpensive than making the same request of a soldier. 」

To Origa's explanation, Hifumi thought about the idea of outsourcing in this world.
While listening to various things, it had become quite late. The clamour from the dining room had also died down.

「 Well then, it is late. Teach me these things tomorrow. My best regards. 」
To Hifumi who stood up, Origa half rose to her feet.
「 Um…. 」 (Origa)
「 Yes? 」 (Hifumi)
「 I, sleeping with master, is not particularly unpleasant…. 」
Towards Origa, Hifumi said,
「 Though I don't know why you are in such a hurry, at least say it without trembling next time. 」
Gently smiling, Hifumi left the room.
「 Origa, why go that far….. 」
Kasha held Origa's shoulder anxiously as Origa quietly cried.

On leaving the room, Hifumi sighed.
Being approached by a lovely young woman does not feel bad. Before, he liked a woman, and she liked him. They dated for a while, but for some reason separated.
From now on, he has to live in this world. Other than Origa and Kasha, there is a possibility of forming such relationships with others as well. However, what to do in the future is undecided, for there is a feeling of satisfaction of finally killing someone. Hifumi decided to put it on the back burner for now.

「 Well…. 」
Concentrating his conciousness, Hifumi scanned the building and its immediate surroundings.
On the side facing the road, there is a sign of an unnaturally still person near one corner of the building. Moreover, the back of the building.
Hifumi did not return to his room, and quietly jumped out from the window of the second floor passage to the outside.
He silently approached the back of the unnaturally still person.

It was a woman. Lovely blonde hair in loose waves, glossy in spite of the night. Splendid proportions, wearing a remarkably thin almost see-through dress.

On looking at her, she seemed to be a prostitute.
Hifumi approached from the back, and at the last moment called out.

「 Do not move. 」
「 Uu…..? Wh-What, master, you surprised me. 」 (TN: Here, master is like saying boss, or sir, ‘danna’ in JP.)

Unaffected by the way of speaking, the feeling of incongruity remained.
「 Stop your unskilled drama. You are from the Knight Corps. 」

In the silent night, a gasp is heard.
「 Why…. 」

「 In the first place, no prostitute has muscles those thick at her waist and wrist. That is a characteristic of someone used to wielding

something. Secondly, a prostitute is not likely to show herself off at such a scarcely populated street. More likely to earn more money in the red-light area. Thirdly, the hair. 」

「 Hair? 」

「 With lustrous hair like that, only a noble-like person can afford shampoo of such high quality. It is different from those of the people on the street. 」

On being seen through so easily, the woman regretted thinking that Midas' reports were exaggerated.
「 Do not turn around. First your name. With it, what is the identity of the people left to Midas in the day? 」

Giving up, the woman introduced herself as Pajou from the same Third Knight Corps as Midas.
「 The corpses that Midas examined, there was a particular tattoo on all of the bodies. 」
「 Tattoo…. A slave? 」
「 There was no reaction of magic, the shape was also different. I fear that those guys belonged to an underground organisation which uses these tattoos as identifiers. There are records of them several times in the past, so it is possible that they belong to the same organisation. 」

「 Those sorts of groups, don't you have any intelligence on them? 」
「 Honestly, they number too many. When we are able to muster enough force to crush them, they disappear. 」

Hifumi considered that. With the intelligence gathering level of this world, grasping the underworld would be quite troublesome.
「 Oy Pajou. 」
「 Yes? 」
「 From the opposite building, are those the Knight group watching you? 」

Why do you see it so easily, lamenting as such , Pajou turned her gaze towards the room where the window was opened just a little.

「 …. That is so. Two colleagues are observing from there. 」
「 Then, the two in the back of the building? 」

What are you saying now, Pajou did not understand.

「 As expected, it does not seem to be the Knight Corps. It is not possible to relay this to your companions. Come along. 」

「 Aa, wait! 」
Sending a signal to her colleagues for confirmation of contact with target, Pajou chased after Hifumi hurriedly.

When Pajou arrived next to Hifumi who had slipped into the darkness of the building's side, he quietly started explaining.

「 There are two men. They are very likely companions of those guys earlier today. Most likely they are planning for the next attack. 」
「 Catching them? 」
「 Assuming they are caught, can you make them talk? 」
「 That is….. 」

Assuming that torture is done, the certainty is not expected. In this age where technology was not that advanced, Hifumi figured that the possibility of being killed before obtaining any information was high. From the reaction of Pajou, there seems to be neither magic nor a medicine used for such purposes.

「 One person will be killed. The other will be wounded, trace that one. 」
While saying so, Hifumi took out two 2cm masses of iron from his clothes, corners shaved to a point.

「 These are weapons from my country. It has various names, my school calls them 'Tsubute'. Apparently, throwing weapons are not seen as important. I'll display an interesting one. 」

Smoothly slipping half out of cover, two 'Tsubutes' flew up quickly. The man who was looking at the second-floor rooms fell to a sudden impact.
The other somehow stood up and left hurriedly on seeing the first one's demise. Holding his side where the 'Tsubute' grazed him, his speed was slow.

「 Lets go. 」

While chasing the man marked by Hifumi, Pajou passed the first one, and saw him dead, bleeding from a hole in his neck.
A small grain of iron becomes a deadly weapon…… Perhaps the victim himself will not know what hit him. Pajou looked at Hifumi's

back and shivered, knowing that if one was hostile to Hifumi, far from clashing with swords in a dignified manner, there will be a result in which one will be dead before realising it.

The man who escaped the sudden attack and death of a friend would be confused. Not paying attention to the surroundings, he entered the aristocratic block, not far off from the castle and disappeared into the back door of a large mansion.
Hifumi verified from a distance that the man had entered the grounds, following him, Pajou also saw it.

「 There… that is Marquis Raghlain's estate. 」
「 Marquis huh. That guy is a big-shot eh? 」
「 Ee, moreover…. One of the Knights killed by you in the audience room was the second son of the family head, Marquis Raghlain. 」

After saying that, Pajou realised her mistake.

The second son of Raghlain died attacking Hifumi. That time, Hifumi had made the King, the father pay for the princess' crime. Then, what will Hifumi do in the residence of a hostile person?

Retrieving his katana from his waist, the answer is clear from Hifumi's smile.

「 Is that so. That's extremely good to hear. 」
Pajou regretted not having had the other Knights follow her.
「 Well then, I must warn you not to trouble me. 」
Not thinking the warning was necessary, the dress-wearing Knight shook her head.

8. What A Fool Believes

「 Can't you even observe properly! 」 Unable to control his anger, the current head of the Raghlain family, Karcimoral Vado Raghlain hurled a stunningly decorated earthenware cup at a man kneeling in his presence. A small amount of wine pooled around the remnants of the broken cup.

Dripping blood, the man who ran away from Hifumi's attack silently crouched. His side was lightly bound with cloth.

「 Could you leave it at that? In addition, the number of people have decreased, I am embarrassed. 」

「 Orbas. No matter the circumstances, think about dealing with the Hero as soon as possible. 」

The man with honey-coloured, shoulder-length hair called Orbas gave a faint smile, and sighed. The man writhing with pain on the floor was kicked away.
「 Oi, head to the standby room, wake everyone up and arm them. 」

He said in a low voice that did not seem to match his face.

「 Really, I have to deal with your mess. Work yourself to the bone and redeem your worth. 」

The man on watch frantically left the room.
The Marquis made an unpleasant face on watching this and turned to Orbas.
「 Now, what to do? 」
「 Um, that is….. 」

Out of habit, playing with his hair, Orbas shook his head.

「 Hero-san's skill, Marquis is aware of it yes? Come to think of it, it seems impossible for that fool to escape with only a slight injury. 」
「 Mu….. Then 」

「 Clearly, that fool was deliberately let go. Panicking, he was most likely to come here in a hurry. Most likely he was followed and we will have company soon. 」

「 Hmm. Your soldiers and those of the territorial army are here too. In any case, a skilled magician is also hired here. That much should be enough to handle that one guy. 」

Laughing scornfully while drinking his wine, Karcimoral looked at Orbas with cold eyes.
That sort of easy opponent, it is not too troublesome.

Hifumi did not hesitate.
「 The guy that escaped is here. The fellow targeting me should be here. 」

Two soldiers stood at the gate of the Raghlain estate.
Walking forward, Hifumi casually walked over to the soldiers as though they were acquainted.

Behind Hifumi, Pajou followed.
「 What are you saying?? This is the Marquis' estate! Leave, leave! 」(Pajou)

「 Hmm, such a reaction was expected. 」(Hifumi)

Though understanding, Pajou showed a cramped smile while speaking to his back.
「 Haa～ 」
Letting out a quiet shout, Hifumi pinched the guard's throat with his fingers. Falling against the gate behind him, the guard collapsed, unconscious.

「 …… Didn't kill. 」
Pajou said, surprised. Annoyed, Hifumi replied,

「 I don't murder everyone. Killing is a weapon for me, only fit for those hostile to me. 」
Saying this while approaching the other confused and stock-still guard, Hifumi knocked him out in a similar manner, the guard collapsed powerlessly next to the wall.

「 By the way, why should I follow? 」

「 You will be my lookout. Besides, to prove to the people tat come along that this slaughter was due to legitimate self-defense. 」
Though you arrived at the enemy gates voluntarily, thought Pajou, refraining from voicing her thoughts.

Though Pajou thought Hifumi would surely walk in through the

front door, unexpectedly, Hifumi soundlessly headed towards a bungalow built separately from the main building.
There was no one patrolling around it.
「 Are you not meeting the Marquis? 」

On being asked in a low whisper, Hifumi replied without turning around.

「 The guys that attacked me, they will not be a noble's subordinate. It takes regular training for them to be that inconspicuous. Most likely, there is a group on the premises used by those underground organisations. I want to hear the story from them. 」

I see, thought Pajou.
If nobility have a degree of financial power and territory, they have private soldiers such as the territorial army. However, because there is a law that the King must be informed the details of the territorial army, they cannot be used for any covert work. Unlike normal troops, they can only be used for 'disposal'.

「 Imeraria has given a strict order that I am not to be touched, yes? Additionally, I am sure you want to keep the death of your King concealed. Even if you know the circumstances, this incident can be used as potential to start a war. So this can be left to people from the underworld. 」

The entire wing of the bungalow came into view. There were a few windows, the stonework was of simple make. In front of the wooden door, a disagreeable-looking man stood.

「 Well then, time to greet them. 」

「 Oi, you, is your boss in there? 」

「 Aa, who…. eh……eh? 」

On seeing Hifumi's face, the man's voice gave out. Apparently the man seemed to know Hifumi's face.

「 The man you people have been looking for is here. 」(Hifumi)

「 You bastard! Nonchalantly walking in! 」

Coming to his senses, the man struck without a weapon. With his good physique, it was a good punch, Hifumi evaluated

disinterestedly.

However, it did not connect.
The punch was easily avoided by a slight movement of the head, Hifumi was already facing the guard's back. Hifumi hit the back of the guard's knee with his toes, when he dropped to one knee, grabbed his jaw and the back of his head and twisted.

Gugyo , a damp, unpleasant sound was heard, Pajou turned her eyes away instinctively.

Killing like this…..
Too cruel, Pajou, who did not think she could do it, felt her stomach tremble.

Near to where the corpse was discarded, a person with shoulder-length hair called out to Hifumi.
「 Do not decrease our numbers any more. 」

「 I thought someone was here, are you these guy's boss? 」

「 I am the leader. But how were you able to understand that? 」

Orbas dared to show himself frivolously while touching his hair. All, to induce negligence in the opponent.

「 Positioned as you are, the opponent's weapons can be confirmed and any movements can be seen. The point of you touching your hair is to unfasten your weapon, yes? 」

On being seen through, the smile on Orbas' face disappeared.

「 The presence of the guys inside, also, those guys that attacked in the day, their movements were monotonous and their scheme was insufficient, although not bad. Their co-operative movements also, it felt like they learned from someone. Not you. 」

「 Yareyare…. As expected of Hero-sama. 」

Orbas faintly smiled again, and pulling out the knife from his back, tossed it aside.

「 I give up. Even a squad of 10 people were defeated, the tables have turned. The levels are just too different. 」

Giving up, Orbas raised his arms with his palms showing.

「 As you can see, weapons have been discarded. Just my life, can you please spare it, Hero-sama? 」

「 No. I was attacked by your instructions. I will not allow it. 」

To Hifumi not showing any mercy, Orbas could not conceal his bewilderment.

「 Wait a minute, you would kill an unarmed man? 」

「 What are you saying. 」

Hifumi smoothly stepped forward, his hand on his katana.

「 You have a weapon. 」(Hifumi)

「 Chii! 」

Orbas immediately took out a small knife from the cuff of his raised arm, and instantly swung downwards at Hifumi.

However, Hifumi was no longer there. Orbas tried desperately to turn towards Hifumi, who was already behind Orbas, but to no avail.

The separated left arm and head fell to the ground, followed by the rest of the body.

「 His performance was so-so, should have hidden his bloodlust better. 」

Though Hifumi was about to pull out the kaishi[2] tucked in his kimono, with a single shake of the katana, the blood was cleared off, without a trace remaining.
Is this the God's influence? Truly convenient, muttered Hifumi as he sheathed his katana.

The door was kicked open, and about 20 subordinates of Orbas stared at the entrance, unable to move.
At the entrance stood Hifumi, holding Orbas' head.

「 B-Boss!! 」

「 You're the bastard that killed Ain and the others! 」

A man nearest to the entrance leaped at Hifumi. In a single movement, Hifumi drew his katana and sliced him to pieces.

「 Yeah yeah, quiet down. 」

Confirming that Pajou was behind him, Hifumi pulled his katana out of the body while imposingly standing in the doorway.
The instantly enraged people instantly became quiet.
The beautiful blade crest shimmered in the light of a candle on a table.

「 If you don't want something similar to happen to you, answer my questions obediently. Resist like that guy, or not answer appropriately, everyone dies. 」

While throwing Orbas' head on the floor, Hifumi surveyed the men in the room.

「 The first question. Who are you fellows and are all members here? Oh, if I sense a lie, it's time to kill. Well then, you. 」
Hifumi pointed his katana at the nearest guy.

「 M-Me? ……. We are called "Hidden Serpent". All it's members are here. 」
Resigned, the nominated man answered obediently.

「 Then, next. You people, in the Marquis' employ, was attacking me in the daytime the order of the Marquis? 」
Looking Hifumi in the eye, he began to talk while trembling.

「 Rather than employed, we are allowed to use this place for occasionally undertaking errands for the Marquis. We do not set foot into the Marquis' home… This should have been a request from the Marquis, the leader said so. 」
On hearing the answer, Pajou fleetingly glanced at Hifumi.

「 …. Certainly, regarding nobles' residences, leaving aside on-the-spot inspections, yield no clear evidence. 」
Pajou said with a sigh mixed in. To think that there might be criminals who have similarly been given shelter, it was depressing.

「 And the last question. Are there troops in the Marquis' mansion? Does anyone here know? 」
One person timidly raised his hand.

「 On answering, will I be spared? 」

「 I am asking the questions. 」

「 Uu…. There were many soldiers on duty in the mansion, on patrol and so on, but it seems that they don't enter the third floor where the Marquis is. Recently, rumours of a magician being hired have been circulating. 」

「 A magician huh…. 」

Receiving Hifumi's permission, the members of Hidden Serpent ran away at full speed.
Pajou shifted her gaze to the criminals fleeing from the shelter.

「 Your job is intelligence, not criminal law enforcement. Spend time arresting them, the Marquis will be able to escape. 」

「 Though that is so….. 」
Hifumi went out, Pajou reluctantly followed.

「 I'm getting drowsy, so bothersome. 」
Hifumi murmured, looked up at the side wall of the mansion, and using his fingers, climbed up smoothly via the few irregularities in the stonework.

Watching the figure dressed in a hakama ascend the wall speedily, Pajou could do nothing but watch bitterly. In the blink of an eye, Hifumi reached the third floor, skillfully opening the wooden window with one hand, he leapt inside.
After a little while, a rope that usually binds curtains descended from the open window.
「 In this dress, I should climb? 」 (Pajou)

「 No, just grab it. 」
Pajou gripped the rope tilting her head in confusion, and was instantly launched upwards.
「 ～～～～～～～! 」(Pajou)
Unable to let out any words, Pajou was caught inside the room.

「 Well then, this seems to be an office-like room. 」
Looking around the room which had a large, stately desk and an elegant bookshelf, Hifumi muttered.

「 Next door, there is the presence of one person. The presence on this floor……No, near the stairs is an unusual stagnating presence. Possibly, in the next room is the Marquis. The guy on the stairs is most probably the magician from the rumors. 」

Pajou did not doubt Hifumi's words any more.

「 Well then, search for your achievements. 」
「 Haa? 」

Relying on the dim light of a wax candle, Pajou confirmed documents one after the other.
Hifumi, who could not read the characters was rummaging around the desk.

「 No problem with the documents…. huh? 」

A certain bookshelf, its depth seemed unnaturally inadequate.
「 What's wrong? 」

Calling out to Hifumi, Pajou explained the irregularity.
Without hesitating, Hifumi threw away all the documents on the racks to the floor and peeled off the rear boards with a sound like tape being pulled off. A bunch of documents spilled out from a hidden compartment.
Picking them up, Pajou quickly looked them over and said with a shaking voice,

「 This…. an account book containing records of secret trades with our neighbouring country, Vishi…. 」
「 Oh, there's your achievement. 」

Far from an achievement, if things don't go well, the Marquis may bump her off, Pajou shivered. No matter what happens, if unable to safely return to the castle, her life may be forfeit.

「 Ah, not the fellow next door, but the guy near the stairs is coming here. Be quiet for a minute. 」

To Hifumi nonchalantly saying that, Pajou started to panic.
「 Wh-What do we do? 」

「 Calm down. First, see what kind of guy he is. 」
The door slowly opened, and a man wearing a black robe with a hood covering his eyes entered.

「 …… A thief? 」
An extremely hoarse voice rang out.

「 So you're the magician that was employed. 」

On seeing Hifumi speak, the magician quickly drew a knife from his robe and pointed it at Hifumi and Pajou.

「 …… 」

The magician chanted something in a low voice, and an invisible blade of wind flew forward.

「 Auuu! 」 (Pajou)
Unlike Hifumi, Pajou was struck by it on the shoulder and losing her balance, fell.

「 You dodged it?… 」

「 M-Magic dagger…. A magician from the Horant country, why is it! 」

To Pajou's words, the magician laughed under his hood at her holding her shoulder and taking some distance.

「 Ho~, you know our country's magic tool quite well. Though you've got the appearance of a prostitute, are you a dog of Orsongrande? 」

While the magician was speaking, Hifumi drew near.
「 Nuu! 」
Hifumi's thrust met a sudden gust of wind.
That violent gust of wind blew up the documents scattered on the floor, the pen on the desk flew up, and the chair was knocked over.
The candle fell, the documents on the desk began to burn.

「 Hmm, magic can also be used like this huh. 」

The fire was spreading, watching the unworried Hifumi admire wind magic, the magician was secretly in a cold sweat.
According to the plan, the gust of wind should have blown away the sword, and without the sword…
However, Hifumi adjusted his katana according to the direction of the wind while receiving it, neutralizing it. In spite of seeing such magic for the first time, such marvellous flexibility.
While the magician thought that even if he wins, he would not come out of this unscathed, a new person entered.

It was Marquis Raghlain from the next room.
「 Strauss, what is this situation! …… You! 」

The moment the Marquis saw Hifumi's face, he tried to shout something, a gust of wind hit the Marquis' back. This was the act of the magician Strauss.

Calmly knocking down the Marquis who was thrown at him, Hifumi returned his gaze towards Strauss, but he had already run away. His speed points to magic being used for movement.

「 …..He ran away huh… 」

The fire was already spreading from the desk to the documents scattered on the floor.

「 Pajou, do you have the documents? 」

「 Ee, they’re all right…….. Hey! 」

When Pajou looked up after stopping the blood from her wound by tearing off a piece of her dress, a shocking scene met her eyes.

Hifumi threw the fainted Marquis out of the window they came in from.

「 Don’t worry. He’s not dead yet. 」

Hurriedly going to the window and looking, Pajou saw the Marquis’s figure in a tangle of thick shrubbery. One leg was bent in a weird direction, but he seemed to be alive.

「 Well then, leave. 」

「 J-Jump down? 」

「 Obviously. Enemies will soon flood the room, and leaving will be delayed. 」

Seeing Pajou hesitating while looking out the window, Hifumi clicked his tongue.

「 No other way. Hold onto the documents tightly. 」

「 Eeh? Wai-, IYAAA～～～～～! 」

Grabbing and holding her sideways under his arm, Hifumi immediately jumped out of the window.

- Kaishi = Piece of paper often used in Tea Ceremonies.

9. Weapon of Choice

After waiting for Origa to finish crying, Kasha slowly spoke.

「 Something like sleeping together….. Why did you say such a thing? 」

「 ….. I'm sorry for worrying you. At any cost, I thought that I had to attract … 」

Wiping away her tears, Origa gradually began to speak.
「 The affair that cheated us and turned us into debt-slaves.. 」

「 Ah, I'll never forget! The merchant of Vishi…. Beirevura. If I see him, I will absolutely kill him! 」
Resentment welling up, Kasha gnashed her teeth and growled, now Origa calmed her down.

「 Fuu….. sorry Origa. I could not endure it on remembering. 」
「 It's all right. I feel the same way. 」
In the past, when Origa and Kasha were adventurers, they had accepted an escort commission from a trader called Beirevura, who cheated them into owing a large amount of money. Though they tried desperately to repay it, Origa suffered from an injury, became unable to earn, and they were subsequently made debt-slaves.

「 But it is not possible to take revenge now that we are slaves. 」

Excitement subsiding, Kasha quieted down. Origa placed her hand on Kasha;s shoulder and clearly said,
「 I have not given up on revenge. 」

Different from usual, the intense emotion-laden words made Kasha look at Origa.

「 Hifumi san….. Master is powerful. The fight earlier today, and if master's story is true, called as a hero from a different world, the Knights in the castle….. Moreover, making an enemy of elites of the royalty.. 」

「 But, our enemies, whether master will help or not…. 」

「 Therefore, I will persist in making master's feelings turn towards me. 」

The reason for Origa's strange aggressiveness today, Kasha finally understood.
「 So that is the reason….. I'm sorry Origa, I didn't notice your resolution in facing master. 」

「 It's all right. I too did not consult with Kasha either under pressure. When master quickly refused, after I cried, I became calm for a moment. 」

Abruptly smiling, Origa said slightly ashamedly.

「 Besides…. Master isn't bad I think…. The bought items also, now don't feel too bad. 」(TN: This sentence has a possible double meaning. She says "it doesn't feel so bad", where 'it' can be the master or the items. I think.)

「 Ee…….? 」

「 Now then, it's late, let's sleep soon. 」

They stood up, and Origa crawled into the opposite bed.
Origa's explosive statement for some reason made Kasha go *dokidoki*, and she did not sleep easily.
Marquis Raghlain was carried to the street of the hotel, then Hifumi entrusted everything to Pajou and quickly went back to his room and slept. Incidentally, since the main entrance was locked and bolted, he climbed in from the window he had left from.
The next morning, Hifumi woke up before sunrise, tended to his katana, finished his daily routine of stretches, and then sat in seiza and meditated.

Come to think of it, exactly one day ago I met those Gods.

Since then, various things have come about. Freed from the restraints of killing people, able to practice techniques to the extreme. Hifumi thought he was truly blessed, living as a martial artist in the modern age was quite hard.

It may be possible in a country at war, but in peaceful modern society, martial arts equalled violence. It was frowned upon for any martial artist to use techniques. Moreover, in case of death, they were blamed.

Such a situation was indeed very vexing.
Suddenly, a knocking sound was heard.

「 Master, breakfast is ready. 」

Origa's humble voice reached the other side of the door.

「 Got it. Go on to the dining room before me. 」

「 Certainly. We will wait. 」

It's not particularly necessary to wait though, Hifumi thought as he adjusted his hakama and looked at his attire. He was still wearing his martial arts dougi and hakama from yesterday.

「 I should look for a clothes shop, get the same thing made. 」

Somehow, Hifumi did not want to wear the clothes from this world.

Finishing breakfast, for the time being Hifumi paid the hotel fees for the day, and took Origa and Kasha to town again.

「 We'll go to the guild today. If there is time, I want to go to a clothes shop. As for the Adventurer's Guild can anyone register? 」

「 Yes. Though the registration fee is 5 silver coins, as long as there is no criminal record…. 」

「 Well, it's all right then. 」

The matter in the castle is treated as legitimate self-defense.
With Kasha as the guide, Hifumi was observing the town. As usual, the signboards could not be read, the literacy reate does not seem to be high. The signboards also had symbols and paintings carved in an easy-to-understand way.

Be that as it may, I should quickly learn the characters to avoid problems in the future. Is there a bookstore here?

On the way to the guild, there was no bookstore.

「 We arrived…. what's wrong? 」 (Kasha)

「 It doesn't seem that there are shops selling books here. 」 (Hifumi)

「 Books! Only nobles or scholars read them. 」

The conversation would shock a bibliophile, just how low was the literacy rate? There seems to be no habit of reading for normal

citizens.

Haa, with the literacy rate this low, books can be seen as high-quality goods, and the chances of libraries existing is very low. A great method of information-gathering is gone.

Pulling himself together, Hifumi stepped into the guild.

Unlike in novels, the bar and room is not combined as one.
There were some counters in the back, tables for meeting were lined up along the left-side wall. The notices were placed on a board on the right-side wall.
Several groups seated on the tables, looked curiously at the unfamiliar face leading two women.

「 The back counter, that treated as the reception. 」 (Origa)

Approaching the counter Origa indicated Hifumi spoke to the woman sitting behind the counter.

「 Have a minute? 」

「 Yes. What can I help you with? 」

The young woman who had long red, eye-catching hair answered with a smile.

「 I want to register as a newcomer….. How is that done? 」

「 Our registration document was taken from us, when we became slaves I don't think we get the same treatment as adventurers. 」

To Kasha's words while shaking her head, the guild became noisy. Kasha having become a slave, seemed to be shocking in its own way.

「 Kasha is a slave… is it? 」

「 Origa too, has become a slave from an adventurer? 」

Hearing that Origa too was a slave, the surroundings became even noisier. A man was staring at Hifumi with a bitter gaze. Origa seems to be popular.

Of course, Hifumi was unconcerned with such gazes.

「 Err… Once registered as an adventurer, the registration card can

be reissued. Since the slaves are doing the jobs, the owner has to pay a charge. One gold coin is necessary for reissue. A new registration is 5 silver coins. 」

What do you want to do? On being asked this by the staff, Hifumi thought it was inconvenient without identification papers.

「 Ah, whatever, do not worry about the money. Reissue for two. 」

Though Hifumi one-sidedly decided it, Kasha and Origa's expressions softened. Watching them, the men's gazes became those full of jealousy.
The few female adventurers repeatedly glanced at him, somehow rumours about him started getting inflated.

「 Then, please fill out this form. 」

「 Aa, I will fill it. Is master's name as Hifumi-sama agreeable? 」 (Origa)

Hearing Origa call him 'master', as expected was slightly gloomy, thought Hifumi.

「 Full name is Hifumi Touno. 」

「 To have a family name, was master a noble? 」

「 In my hometown, generally everyone had a family name. 」

「 Fuun.. 」

While filling in the age and weapons used (the name 'katana' did not exist, so it was written as 'sword'), a large man drew near to Hifumi.

「 Oh, with those thin arms, you are not fit to be an adventurer. That stick-like thin sword? Such a thing, can it won't even kill a goblin. 」

Even though it was said with a heavy intimidating air, Hifumi completely ignored the man.

「 You two are younger than me? I thought Kasha was older than me. Though I did not hear your ages when I bought you two. 」

「 You mean to say I look old?! 」 (Kasha)

「 Your build seemed as though you were 17. Origa is 16? Because she is smaller, I thought she was younger. 」

「 Uuu… 」

The large man was disregarded, Kasha and Origa's attention was on Hifumi.
Seemingly unable to endure it, the man's face was flushed and grabbed the hilt of a huge sword corresponding to his huge body.

「 You bastard, don't ignore me! 」

Ignoring the man yet again, Hifumi turned towards the smiling staff member. Kasha and Origa seemed to know her too, her name was Hera.

「 I want to confirm something. 」

「 Yes, what is it? 」

「 What happens if I kill someone who pulls out their weapon and assaults me? 」

「 Err… 」

Asked as such, Hera reflexively looked at the large man, and returning her gaze to Hifumi answered in a fluster.

「 With regards to weapons, it is not a crime if used in self-defence, the guild does not particularly question it either…. 」

What will you do?, To Hera who answered on tenterhooks, Hifumi smiled, thanked her, and turned towards the large man.

「 Is that so? If you draw your weapon, I will kill. Choose. Obediently withdraw, or die. 」

「 You bastard……! 」

Spitting out lines that seemed perfectly provocative, the guild became noisier in a very different way from before.
The large man's name was Okku. In accordance with his appearance he was strong, short tempered, uncouth, and was recognised as competent. He got along with young men and gave out honest advice as well.
The other adventurers thought the young man was a fool for having

provoked the big-shot Okku, and was overconfident in his power.

However, one thing did not make sense to them.

Origa and Kasha, who knew Okku's power, did not even try to stop the man who called himself Hifumi.

「 Though I thought I'd teach you about the harsh reality, in a little while, I'll make it so that you won't be able to move～～! 」

Saying so, Okku pulled out his greatsword and grasped it with both hands in an instant.

Slipping out of it's sheath, the katana was swung, from bottom to top.

The katana that moved faster than anyone's words stopped above Okku's head.

Silence fell. Though it felt like an eternity, a short time later, changes happened.

「 Uu.. 」
Okku groaned, the last sound he ever made.

His right hand was severed at the wrist, leaving the spine intact, he was cut open from groin to head.

The greatsword fell, body pitching forward and collapsing, Okku's blood and entrails spilled out.

「 O..Okku! 」

Several men who seemed to be companions of Okku ran upto him, but no one faced Hifumi. According to Hera's explanation, though provoked, Okku was the first to draw his weapon.
They are purely scared of Hifumi's power.

「 It's been a while since I had this feeling of wanting to kill….. No, since yesterday's interruption at the dojo. Still quite sharp. 」

Not caring even a little bit about the opponent's state, Hifumi looked over his katana and returned it to its scabbard.

Turning around, Hifumi smiled at the staff member, unnoticed put away his sword in the Dark Hole, retrieved gold and silver coins

and placed them on the counter.

「 I kept you waiting. Is this enough? 」

Later on, Hera told a co-worker, that never before had she seen such a frightening smiling face.

10. The Fight Song

After the little disturbance, Hifumi and the other two went towards the board on which requests were posted.
Okku's corpse was carried out by his companions, and the floor was quickly cleaned. As expected of people accustomed to fights.
The guild did not have any ranking system in particular, so there were no restrictions on receiving requests. Probably because of that, the board seemed to be only roughly divided into subjugation and escort requests, that too, in a disorderly way.

「 Today, since I want to see how you two fight, look for a subjugation request near the town. 」

「 How about this one? 」

Origa took down a request pinned on the board and read it out loud.
「 A goblin subjugation request. A group of about 10 of them have been confirmed in the nearby forest. The reward is one silver coin per goblin. 」

「 Since you should have killed many goblins, don't worry about the rewards, just take it. 」

Goblins are small, human-like demons about 1m tall with dirty dark green skin. Often found in forests or meadows, usually in groups of 5 to 10, though not individually strong, if ganged up on at once, it isn't unusual for novices to die.
However, since even the amount obtained after selling their parts is negligible, goblin subjugation is seen as practice for newcomers.
「 Well, it's safe. 」

「 Then, I will register the request. 」
Looking at Origa, who bowed and took the request to the receptionist, Hifumi thought she was quite like a secretary. Looking at her speaking style and bearing, she seems to come from a good family.
Doing something so helpfully and eagerly, Hifumi thought it might be calculated, but did not particularly mind.

Receiving the goblin subjugation request, it was decided to buy clothes before leaving the town. Patting his clothes, Hifumi asked

the guild's staff Hera. Ordinary people generally wore second-hand clothes, and only occasionally bought nicer ready-made clothes. Getting custom-made clothes would be difficult outside the area of the aristocratic block.
「 Generally, for clothes made from special materials and demon hide, such as protective gear, I believe armour shops take such commissions. 」
To Hera saying so with a slightly strained smile, Hifumi also decided to stop by the armourer's shop that was next to Thorn's before leaving town.

「 What is it? the weapon commission is not done yet. 」
Scowling as usual, Thorn, who was working on something inside the shop asked Hifumi who entered.

「 An additional order. 」

「 Additional? Another weird thing again? 」

Gesturing towards his clothes, Hifumi said
「 These are clothes used for practice and combat in my hometown. Wearing these makes me feel at ease. 」

Seeing Hifumi's dark blue dougi and hakama, Thorn frowned.
「 Is this for combat? It's fluttery and isn't it hard to move around in? 」

The dougi's sleeves were long enough to extend below the elbow, the hakama was long enough to almost conceal his feet. Completely opposite to the trousers, hardened boots, and long-sleeved jackets reinforced with iron plates that the adventurers wore.
「 Ah well. For now, I'll need to see the structure of these clothes. Come inside. 」

「 Shall I just take it off here? 」

「 It obstructs business. Stop. 」

Behind him, Kasha and Origa, on seeing Hifumi put his hands on his clothes, hurriedly covered their faces with their hands, though they left gaps between their fingers.

Finished with the dougi's measurements, leaving the raw materials to Thorn, Hifumi put on his dougi, and gave the order to prioritize comfort over defence for his new dougi. Thorn, who was interestedly watching, thought that the way of wearing these

clothes was quite strange.

The dougi itself can be cut from cloth, since materials like metal or plastic are not used, it is possible to make it even with the current technological level of this world. It seems possible to make the leather lining of the hakama as well, from the great turtle demonic beast.

「 Moreover, I can get another set in other towns as well, thanks to the blueprints. 」

「 Blueprints? 」
When Hifumi asked, generally clothes were made based on the craftsman's sense for it, and using blueprints to make a large number of identical parts was unheard of. There was no size display for any equipment in the shop either, it was adjusted as required. Since constantly adjusting the equipment would be a hassle during journeys, Hifumi explained the blueprint.

「 I see. Other than the regular patrons, there are a lot of other guys that buy equipment, so making it by hand is not possible. Such a great paper has come into my hands, substituting cloth with leather….. 」
As an exchange for the idea, Hifumi's clothes were made for free. Incidentally, the dougi and hakama would be done by the next day. Inside the shop, though there are only 5 apprentices, it seems that Thorn is the one that makes the marketed commodities.

They finally left the town. Leaving the shopping area, going on past the castle gate, a plain with a highway of bare earth stretched on as far as the eye could see.
Hifumi was impressed by this scene which could not be found in Japan.

「 Full of nature. The smell of the trees and plants is heavy. 」

Origa and Kasha, who lived in this world did not understand his words.

「 Master, let us move quickly. The forest is that way. 」
Kasha, glad to be able to fight after a long time, pointed in a direction away from the highway and hurried on.

When Hifumi looked, the forest seemed to start at a certain point on the plain. Walking, it would take around 20 minutes to reach it.

「 Inside the forest, the goblins were witnessed in a place about one hour towards the center. 」
Origa informed everyone, after looking at the request.
In this world, only a small portion of nobles have clocks. The common people have to rely on the position of the sun, a bell at noon and their own biological clocks. In some farm villages, even bells were absent. Even if one hour is written, since it is the account of the reporter, it's reliability is unknown.
In the meantime, they arrived at the forest.
Kasha slowly pulled out her swords, Origa took out her staff rolled up in cloth and shouldered it. Watching the two people pull out their weapons, Hifumi felt weird.

「 Oy, why are you pulling the swords out now? 」

「 Eh? We are entering the forest now, so I am preparing my weapon……. 」
To their faces expressing *what is he saying*, Hifumi could not hide his surprise.

「 Nono, isn't preparing for a battle essential? By any chance, should any situation arise?…. Origa cannot use her magic without the staff…. 」(Kasha)
「 I am sorry. To be skilled like master, I cannot use magic without a medium or a chant…. 」
「 Anyone can prepare their sword in advance for battle. Master is amazing, knocking down an incoming arrow like that using the katana without anyone realising. 」

Seemingly displeased by their off the point answers, Hifumi held their gaze.

「 M-Master? 」

「 Sit down, we're going to have a little chat. 」

Not understanding clearly, Origa and Kasha sat down timidly on the grass.

「 Among the martial artists of my country, we are familiar with "Battlefield awareness". Do you understand it's meaning? 」

Looking at their confused expressions, Hifumi continued while tapping his sword.

「 It means that at any time, battle may erupt. My country is

peaceful now, In older times, it was safe in it's own way inside towns. As such, the royal capital is also quite safe, but it will be different outside the town. 」
Origa and Kasha exchanged a look. What Hifumi wanted to say had not been cleared up yet.
「 Leaving the highway and entering the forest, one hears that demons tend to show up. However, only "heard". What is your reason for something near the town? Do demons wait for you to prepare your swords and staffs? Not just demons, humans are more troublesome. Outside the town, without knowing whether it is an enemy or not, what will you do if suddenly attacked? A little while ago, Kasha referenced the story of me and the arrow. That was in town. 」
The two could not refute Hifumi's words, and silently listened.

「 Kasha. What would you have done if you were attacked with your swords sheathed? 」

「 Um….. Buy time to draw my swords by gaining some distance. 」

「 For example, a scenario like yesterday's blind alley? 」

「 That is…. 」

Turning his gaze away from Kasha who was lost for words, Hifumi looked at Origa.

「 Origa, how long would it take for you to cast magic without your staff at the ready? 」

「 Hm, about 20 seconds at the very least. 」

「 When attacked without the staff, even momentarily fighting with weapons or tools? Leave aside whether you've bought them or not. Can you use them? 」

「 ….. Have not used them……. 」
Origa already had a face that seemed ready to cry.
The two seem to be middle-level adventurers. In other words, they possess basic skills, and common sense of this world and it's knowledge of fighting. The standard level of this world was quite average, judged Hifumi.

Now that I think of it, the guy from the guild who attacked drew his sword comparatively angrily…..

It seems that preparing for a fight is a way of thinking for this country. Short spears seem to be the basic equipment for the people in the castle, possibly because the time taken to pull a weapon from it's sheath is more.

Then, not just adventurers, but regular soldiers as well..

In ancient Rome, it was heard that spears were disassembled while marching. Before attacking, they were reassembled. Though the type of fighting is different, it was not as leisurely as using handguns and rifles in the modern world.
While watching the slaves looking at him with upturned eyes, a bad idea came to Hifumi's mind.

Though it would be tiresome to think about domestic affairs, spreading strife in this world would be interesting. Problem is, this country, or a newer one?

Origa, unable to endure the long silence Hifumi had fallen into, called out.
「 U-Um…. Though it may take the inexperienced me some time, I will learn how to fight without magic, so please do not abandon us… 」

「 Hn…. Ah, I was lost in thought. No abandoning will be done….. Alright, it's decided. 」

Hifumi looked at Origa and Kasha, the evil expression from a while ago disappeared, replaced with an enchanting smile.

「 I will train you. The immediate goal will be for you to handle a single one of the guys that attacked yesterday on your own. 」
The reactions of the two were polar opposites of each other.

「 Uu…. such movements, though I don't think we can do it….. 」 (Kasha)

「 Master, thank you very much! 」 (Origa)

「 Origa, do your best. Kasha, it is impossible to move like that immediately. Well then, first of all, I will have you two start moving. 」

Origa and Kasha hurriedly ran after Hifumi, who was rapidly walking towards the depths of the forest.

「 There seem to be five of them there, for the time being, use your magic and sword skills. I will not raise a hand. Can you do it? 」

「 Please leave it to us. 」(Origa)
「 5 of them, it is not a problem. 」(Kasha)
Both of them enthusiastically responded and tightly grasped their weapons.

As the sunlight waned, when Hifumi and the two showed up at the guild, it became noisy again. Only the hem of Hifumi's hakama was dirty, and he did not look tired either, but the slaves were worn-out. Though not injured, they were clearly exhausted.

「 Did only Origa and Kasha fight? 」
Inadvertently criticizing, Hera asked Hifumi who came to the counter.

「 No? Though we hunted a lot, I killed half of them. 」

「 S-So many? 」
A jute bag, previously bought in town, filled with goblin ears was put on the counter. There were easily 50 or more.
On receiving the bag, Hera confirmed that the bag was filled with 63 ears. It amounted to 63 silver coins. Though small change to Hifumi, it was abnormal for a first day earning.

「 Fighting so much, it must be tiring… 」(Hera)

Hera, who had seen Hifumi's power could not help but believe that he had killed around 30 of them. More attention was paid to Origa and Kasha, who were wearily sitting down.

「 They became tired not just from fighting goblins. Hunting ended at midday. 」
「 Eh, then… 」
「 I drove the fundamental training into them quite severely. 」

To Hifumi snorting, what kind of training did they go through, to exhaust them this much? Hera was frightened.
Abruptly, two men wearing light armour violently entered the guild.
Advancing straight to the interior, they approached the counter next to Hera.

「 We are from the public order maintenance corps. This morning, there was a matter of a man named Okku killed here, is there

anyone who knows the situation? 」
The staff member spoken to instinctively glanced towards Hifumi and Hera. The two soldiers also looked towards them.

「 Ah, I'm the one that cut that guy. What is it? 」
「 Ee? Eh? 」
Hera also nodded when asked.

「 Then, we want to hear the accounts of the incident. You will come with us to the station. 」

「 Ah? He drew his sword and attacked, I responded. Ask the other witnesses if you have any doubts. 」

The two soldiers, whose foreheads had creased on seeing Hifumi's attitude were about to say something, when two people ran into the guild.

「 ……Were we in time? 」
「 Its good we reached before blood started flowing. 」

It was Midas and Pajou, belonging to the Third Knight Corps. Unlike the last time, they were wearing white military uniforms, probably the uniform of the Knight Corps.
「 Midas from the Third Knight Corps. The matter this morning will be taken over by the Third Knight Corps. 」

「 Th-Third Knight Corps? Then, this guy…. this person.. 」

「 Is not a noble…… There are circumstances that cannot be spoken of. 」

The soldiers looked at each other, but returned quietly knowing they could not interfere since the Third Knight Corps had come into play.
「 Oh, Pajou. Worn out from last night huh. 」(Hifumi)

「 Ee…. Well, eventually I stayed up all night. 」

Dark circles were slightly visible under Pajou's eyes. Though make-up somewhat disguised it, she was clearly tired.

「 Last night……? Master, what happened with this person after dinner? 」
Unawares, Origa was next to Hifumi, looking at Pajou suspiciously.

「 Don’t glare at me so much. Your master manipulated me, there is nothing you need to worry about. 」

Seeing the older woman’s calm reply and composure, Kasha thought,

Sleeping with neither me nor Origa, slipping out in the middle of the night, what did master do?
「 ….. Shall I continue the discussion? 」
Midas, who was cleanly ignored, cleared his throat, straightening his posture, lined up with Pajou and said with an exaggerated voice to Hifumi,
「 Concerning the recent significant events, due to the large contributions in the investigation leading to the suspect’s arrest, saving Knight Pajou, and especially Princess Imeraria’s endorsement as well, Hifumi-dono is to be awarded with the Associate Knight title, and also here is the cash reward. 」

「 Imeraria, what the hell is she planning? 」

With a Knight suddenly appearing and conferring a peerage, and Hifumi calling the the Princess without any honorific, Origa and Kasha included, the entire guild erupted into an uproar.

11. Can't Stop

Since it was impossible to calmly talk in the guild, Midas and Pajou led Hifumi and the others to a restaurant to eat. Pajou could use the private room, everyone went there.

The restaurant near the aristocratic area, "Pluton" was indeed different, waiters wearing simple yet elegant clothes led them to the room.
Hearing the name of the restaurant, Midas got cold feet, but Hifumi assented to pay.

「 Veteran of the Knight Corps, do not hesitate to pay in a restaurant of this degree. As a Knight, it is shameful. 」
「 Pajou, as a single daughter of a count, you will not understand the hardships of having a wife and children. 」
Entering the room, the Knights took verbal jabs at each other.

「 Though its good that you two are getting along well, I'm hungry. Waiter, what is delicious in this restaurant? 」
Entering the room, Hifumi passed several silver coins to the waiter, the slaves sitting at his sides pretended to read the menu.
Unexpectedly gaining money, the waiter smiled widely.

「 Today, the stock of Bighorn meat is good. It is recommended to have it cooked with Oran sauce and stew of the Sodorant style. Red wine is also available. 」
「 Well then, get both, wine as well. 」

Origa and Kasha were unaccustomed to restaurants of this level, but after looking at the menu interestedly, they gave their respective orders. Pajou seemed accustomed, and asking the waiter various things, decided her order. Midas ordered the same things as Pajou.

「 Master, from your behaviour just now, are you used to fine dining? 」(Origa)
「 If you're coming for the first time and cannot decide, get the professional's recommendation, that's how it is. 」 (Hifumi)

First off, though unable to read the menu, watching Hifumi maintain a serious attitude, Origa felt some respect towards him.

So young, but has the character of an adult. I'm a little envious. (Pajou)

Hifumi ignored Pajou's smirking, as it would be bothersome.

Bighorn meat tasted the same as beef. As the waiter said, the steak was moderately chewy, yet softly melted in the mouth. The sourness of the sauce went well with the meat's delicious sweetness, the dish was a big hit. As for the stew, which contained both vegetables and meat, had a very delicious and complex flavour to it. Kasha, overwhelmed by the delicious food, asked Hifumi for seconds.
Pleasantly acknowledging her, Hifumi hailed a waiter. This time the same steak as Hifumi's was ordered.
「 Kind to the slaves, isn't he? 」(Midas)
Pajou had a surprised look on her face on hearing that.
「 Be they slaves or nobles, living as a person is same for everyone. Faces are different, genders are different, strength is different, social standings are different. Even with so many differences, they're all the same when sliced up. 」(Hifumi)

Though Midas was surprised to hear it, Pajou was unperturbed.
「 I too, on joining the Knight Corps and slipping into the mannerisms of the commoners, my way of thinking changed. Brought up being taught that nobles are special existences, and protecting the ordinary people is what it means to be a Knight. But nothing changes. Being delighted at some trifling good fortune, getting unreasonably angry at something, crying at unexpected misfortune. Thinking about it, slaves are the same. 」(Pajou)

「 However, please be careful about the matter regarding the Marquis. There are many fanatical people out there who consider being a noble as a special privilege…. The majority of them, I think. Nobles in name like me, have smaller territories where the gap between the us and the commoners is small. 」(Pajou)

「 Though people with superiority complexes are occasionally good diversions, they are harmful when left to themselves. For that reason, I think that stimulus like me is necessary to knock down their conceit. 」

It was a joke, Hifumi continued, but the two Knights fell silent.

「 Master, do you wish to fight with the nobles? 」
Origa asked the difficult-to-ask question for the Knights.

「 Not quite. It's nothing to me if they look down on slaves. As far as I'm concerned, it's only a matter of whether they get in my

way or not. 」
Getting an answer that did nothing to reassure them, the two Knights were unable to say anything and were just relieved to know there was no hostility towards them.

Finishing the meal and drinking black tea, Hifumi got to the point.
「 Then, let me hear what Imeraria has prepared. 」
「 Ee, first is the monetary reward. 」
Midas tensely pulled out a small bag from his uniform.
Hifumi checked the contents, there were several silver coins in it.
「 …… By any chance, is this country poor? 」
「 You should know the answer to that! 」
Unable to endure, Pajou retorted but since Hifumi did not seem to mind, Midas felt relieved.

「 It seems that the “reward being given” is a peerage just to keep up appearances. Ah well, not that it matters. 」
「 Speaking of Associate Knights, their stipend is nonexistent, and there’s hardly any change from a commoner’s standing…. 」
From Origa’s words, Hifumi guessed the reason for this action.
「 In short, keeping me in your pocket is scary, but so is me allying with foreign hostile country. Therefore, while guaranteeing personal liberty, giving me an unimportant peerage among nobles will show that I am affiliated with this country. 」

Midas gulped loudly on hearing Hifumi’s precise analysis. True, the peerage existed as an honorary title. Depending on the interpretation, it may be seen as Orsongrande being miserly.

「 With it, this is to be given as a special favour from Princess Imeraria. 」
Pajou took out a rolled-up paper bound with a red string from her uniform. Not parchment, it was proper paper, though strangely thick.

「 …… I cannot read the characters of this country. 」
Opening the paper passed to her, Origa carefully began to read it.
「 …… A Free Travel permit. From the Orsongrande royalty, travel of Touno Hifumi and his servants within and outside the country is permitted. Signature of authorisation, Imeraria Torie Orsongrande. 」

Aside from Origa who was reading, Kasha too was speechless.
Since there are noble’s territories in various places, entering and leaving such places had some restrictions, even peddlers and

adventurers were strictly scrutinised. Even more so if travelling to another country. It's usually said that farmers and the like spend their entire lives in the towns and villages in which they were born without travelling.
However, anyone with the Royal Family's permit cannot be stopped, regardless the number of people travelling. It's an extremely high-level protection.

「 However, it is only useful within this country. In a hostile country, far from not being able to enter, there's the possibility of being attacked. 」
To Hifumi coolly declaring the state of affairs, Kasha and Origa stared at him in surprise.
The two Knights had on bitter expressions.

「 After all, this is a chain feigning freedom. Telling us to be within range of your sight isn't it? 」
Midas and Pajou did not meet Hifumi's intent gaze. They broke out in a cold sweat and their wine-induced comfortable intoxication vanished as well.

「 That…….what Princess Imeraria is thinking, we do not know. But I think it is convenient for your travels…… 」
「 Haha.. 」
「 Ee? Master? 」

「 Ahaha ! Well, though there might be someone who suggested this, the woman I saw yesterday seemed to be quite pure and naive, is she capable of something like this? Interesting, truly interesting! 」

Everyone was bewildered at Hifumi's sudden laughter.

「 Imeraria, does she have talent for politics? Different from her appearance indeed. 」(Hifumi)

Midas timidly corrected Hifumi while drinking tea.

「 Imeraria-sama is originally pure, our people call her the princess shrine maiden. Unrelated to trickery, this is the first time we Third Knight Corps have been personally instructed. 」

「 But it is understandable, the event in the castle may have had a large influence on Imeraria-sama. Neither the Prince nor the Queen have recovered, only Imeraria-sama is working hard to manage the

current conditions. 」(Pajou)

Seeing the two Knights trying to correct his impression of Imeraria, even though they were afraid of offending him, Hifumi felt at ease.
「 Very well then. I accept the compensation from the princess out of respect for her loyal and hardworking Knights. 」
Saying so, Hifumi received the medal indicating his Associate Knight's title from Pajou.

「 Talking to you, there is no time to relax. 」(Pajou)
「 Seriously. Watching from a distance is much easier. 」(Midas)

(TN: Okay, the next few lines confused me, so take them with a pinch of salt.)

「 You won't be bored. Right? 」(Pajou)
Requesting agreement from Hifumi, Pajou smiled watching Origa nodd docilely, Kasha was wearing a cramped smile. Pajou's smile froze at Hifumi's next words.

「 However, methods like these won't stop me. 」

Leaving the shop, Midas and Pajou separated from Hifumi, since the hotel and castle were in opposite directions. Outside the restaurant, there was another presence that seemed to be another Knight.

「 Midas, Pajou. 」
Hifumi, who called out to the Knights had a serious gaze.

「 Tell Imeraria to give up. Don't even think about manipulating me. Make a move only after considering everything. Move your people as much as possible, and after collecting information, analyse it well. 」(TN: I modified this line. Again, pinch of salt.)
Turning away from the two nodding Knights, Hifumi began to walk towards the hotel with the two slaves. The sun had completely set, relying on Origa's magic to form a light, they advanced along the dark road.
「 Master, what is the significance of your words some time ago? 」

Why does this one have an interest in everything?, thinking such, Hifumi answered Origa's question.
「 Obtain information from everywhere, watch the enemy's patterns and think of various possibilities to avoid defeat. Politics and fighting are very similar. Misunderstanding my own strength may lead to everything ending in an instant. 」

Suddenly understanding something, Origa was lost in thought.
「 What? With master's strength, a thought like that is just too modest. 」(Kasha)

「 Fool. I'm also a normal human being. Attacked unawares, anyone will die when cut. You or me, nothing is different. Only the results of great effort can be shown without carelessness. 」

Kasha inclined her head thinking, *Even if that is the case, will Hifumi really die on being cut? Even injuring him is unimaginable.*

「 We will go out of the town tomorrow morning and practice. I will continue coaching you two after seeing your movements and growth. 」
「 Yes, thank you very much. 」
Origa bowed happily, while Kasha wore a tired expression.

In his room at the hotel, Hifumi was experimenting with his Darkness Magic.
First testing the storage, the bed was completely stored and then retrieved.

Are living things no good?

Trying to store a fly on the wall, it hit the Dark Hole like an obstacle. Hifumi's attempt to enter it was also a failure. It felt like there was an invisible glass wall preventing entry.
Changing the idea and thinking of an image in which his arm was wrapped by the Darkness Magic, his arm disappeared from sight.
Wrapping his whole body in the Darkness Magic, isolated from sight and sound, he could not confirm he was completely hidden, since there was no one else present.
Repeating the experiment while thinking of any possible uses, thinking of using other magic, were the methods and aptitude different?

Come to think of it, Origa has her staff, and that Strauss in the Marquis' place generated magic with a knife.

It seemed necessary to properly study magic, thought Hifumi.

A lot of enjoyable things to do. A fun life.

Satisfied, Hifumi finished up his practice, and crawled into the bed.
「 For a while, I will firmly train those two. 」

Excited with the prospect of having pupils, Hifumi went to sleep.

12. Makes Me Wonder

It was the third day since Hifumi had registered in the guild and Origa and Kasha's practice had begun. The newly made dougi from demon hide was quite comfortable, without the stiffness a new uniform usually has and was easy to move around in. It was quite expensive though, thought Hifumi.

Practice had just started, Origa aside, Kasha too was diligently making efforts.
Finally reaching the guild, the two women silently fell onto a table, completely drained. The others in the guild were used to seeing these kinds of situations now.
Contrary to the two exhausted people, Hifumi relaxedly stepped to the counter and passed over the bag containing the trophies with a practised movement.

「 Thanks for your work. We've received the stone boa request today. 」(Hera)

「 Ah, only the poison glands containing the petrification poison have been stripped off. About 50. 」

「 Then, I shall confirm. 」
Hera decided to ignore the absurd amount that Hifumi hunted.

Speaking of the stone boa, it was a demon usually not longer than 3m with a stone body that blades had no effect against. A bite that injected petrification poison, extraordinarily strong attacks using the tail, boasting of unearthly strength, killing it is extremely difficult. After being killed, the stone body obstructs people from taking out the poison gland within. Adventurers that bring it back profit greatly.

Though bringing in 50 of them in one day generally gives rise to suspicion, Hera had already given up on thinking of Hifumi as normal.
「 There are 52 poison glands, all cleanly removed. The reward is 5 gold coins and 20 silver coins. 」

Taking the coins from the bag, Hifumi pretended to put them in his pocket while throwing them into his Dark Hole storage. The bag was returned to Hera.

Receiving the bag, Hera saw a small smile on Hifumi's face.

「 Did something good happen? 」
「 It's visible on my face? I'm still inexperienced. I'm going to pick up some weapons now. 」
Hera smiled wryly, as expected, it was a dangerous topic.

Rather than resting in the guild, after waiting for Origa to be able to move a little, they went to Thorn's shop to get the ordered weapons.

「 You came? It's done. 」
Sitting at his usual spot, Thorn jerked his chin, calling over Hifumi and the others.
Lining the weapons and equipment on the stand, Thorn himself did not understand them well.

「 First, verify whether the equipment is as ordered or not. After that, try them out in the testing ground in the back. I too want to see how to use it. 」

「 Hmm… 」

There was a gauntlet to be used by Hifumi, a cross-shaped shuriken, and a suntetsu.
In the future, fights with demons would multiply, and he wanted to avoid touching the opponents. However, the gauntlets in this world were unrefined, clunky and excessively hardened. Hifumi, who disliked the resultant restricted wrist movement decided to have a custom one made.

Hifumi put on the gauntlet, moved his wrist about to confirm it's flexibility.
「 Feels good. Not hampering movement, and the hardness is nothing to criticize. 」

「 Although I complied with what you said about the gauntlet, such thin leather and iron sheets will protect nothing. 」

Snorting through his nose at Thorn, Hifumi picked up the other equipment and checked the balance and weight.
「 ….. The shuriken and suntetsu are in good condition. If you're worried about how to use the gauntlet, it's better to watch it in action. 」

Guided by Thorn to the back of the building, they headed into a

vacant lot. In the centre of the lot was a thick pillar about 0.5m in diameter which had traces of several slashes.

「 Kasha, draw your sword and slash at me. Don't hold back. 」

Kasha smoothly drew her sword. In the heavily practised drawing movement, a chance was quickly lost. Watching it, Hifumi reflected that there was still a long way to go.

「 Don't blame me if I cut you, Master. 」

「 Say lines like those if your attacks actually hit me. 」

Imperceptibly, the atmosphere around Hifumi grew colder.

Kasha prepared to use her sword seriously. Leaving aside whether a slave pointing a weapon at their owner was right or wrong, the first thing on the day's practise menu was single-mindedly attacking Hifumi. No strike connected, of course.
Suddenly putting power in her feet, Kasha sprung forward, bringing down her sword in a straight line, not hesitating as a result of experience.

So easy to read, thought Hifumi.

Hifumi raised his left arm and smoothly averted the powerful sword strike aimed at his neck. The sword slash hit the ground, Hifumi lightly headbutted Kasha's forehead.
A dull sound rang out.

「 !….It hurrrtsss～～～…. 」

「 I've said this many times. Over exertion destroys balance. You're not wielding sticks, they're edged weapons, I've taught you this many times. 」

Hifumi said flatly to Kasha, who was rubbing her head with teary eyes.

「 …. I see. Not taking the strike head on, using the gauntlet on the sword's side to redirect it. Skilfully done. 」(Thorn)

「 It's a normal technique from my hometown, not opposing the opponent's power, but using it against them instead. 」
「 Then, show me how to use the next weapons. 」
Showing deep interest, Thorn excitedly urged him on.

「 Then, this is called a cross shuriken, of the throwing-type. 」
Like in Hifumi's blueprint, the shurikens were cross-shaped, with a blade in each direction.

「 Throwing-type? Thrown weapon huh. A bow would be better than a hand-thrown weapon. 」

「 That's what you think. 」

Hifumi threw the shuriken at the pillar to refute Thorn's doubts. The shuriken deeply embedded itself in the pillar with a *gatsun*.

「 For shorter distances, rather than nocking an arrow, aiming and firing, this is much faster. 」

「 Certainly, master can throw from the elbow in an instant. With that speed, any skilled magician's magic would not be in time. 」
(Origa)

Looking at the embedded shuriken from various angles, Thorn gave a low groan.
「 Though it seems to have been thrown lightly, it's tightly lodged in. Though unlikely to mortally wound without excellent control, even if it sticks in an arm or leg, the opponent will be greatly weakened. 」

「 That is so. Throwing and hitting something is easy. On the other hand, shallow wounds will only cause an opponent to flinch. They are weapons to create opportunities to escape. Origa. 」

Called forward, Origa was handed a shuriken.
「 Use this. 」
「 Is that all right? 」

「 Originally I was going to use it, but you use it now. We spoke before about fighting without magic, practice with this so as to recover from situations not in your favour. First of all, aim at a place 5 steps away. I will also teach you the method of throwing it. 」

「 Yes. Thank you very much. 」
「 Not for me? 」
「 Kasha, first handle your sword more skilfully. 」

Che, muttered Kasha, still rubbing her head.

「 Then, how is this used? 」

Thorn asked, holding up the suntetsu.
It consisted of a cylindrical metal rod with a ring attached on the body for a finger to pass through. Different from the Chinese Kenpo version, both ends were sharpened to a point, as requested by Hifumi.
Apart from stabbing, it can also be used to tangle clothes and destroy the opponent's balance, stab into stone walls while climbing.
While explaining the usage, Hifumi grasped the suntetsu and stabbed the end protruding from his fist into the pillar.

A piece of the pillar fell off, exposing a sorry figure.

「 Since all the power can be concentrated at one spot, with enough speed, even if power is lacking, bones can be crushed. Unlike fingers, there is no fear of fingernails peeling off while using it to hang from somewhere. 」

「 Easy to make, yet surprisingly convenient weapons. 」

Testing the suntetsu, Hifumi nodded contentedly and passed Thorn the money.
「 ….It's too much. 」
「 Another suntetsu. Also make 5 more shurikens. 」
「 All right. Come again in 2 days. 」
「 That's fast. 」
「 I've made them once, it is easier to make them again. 」

For the next few days, Hifumi made Origa and Kasha constantly practiced. Hunting demons as practice targets, every day was nightmarish.

「 Haa…..Haa…. 」
Today, Origa was trying hard to hit a "runner rabbit" with the shuriken. Hifumi had given her challenges like "Kill one after a strike to the neck", "Without fail strike it while walking or running", "From morning, strike and kill 10 of them".
She had walked around for about 2 hours, but they escaped every time on sensing her footsteps and breathing. Barely grazed, far from fatal wounds, even ordinary wounds weren't accomplished. The time limit was in an hour. Achieving the target did not seem possible.

Not having hit a moving target, Origa cursed her previous self-confidence and wanted to hit herself for answering Hifumi's challenges with a proudly puffed-out chest. (TN: We're talking about pride here guys.)

I did not think moving targets would be this hard to hit.

Hasty movements are sloppy, excessive noise makes them run away. Origa was miserable, with a face ready to cry at any moment.

In such a case, I cannot face master….!

「 Calm down. 」
Breathing roughly while looking for prey, abruptly, her head was hit. She didn't notice anyone nearby at all.
「 M-Master…? 」
Facing someone she did not want to meet at that moment, Origa did not know what kind of face she was making. Hifumi smiled wryly.

「 What an awful face. Prowling with a blood-curdling face like that, timid guys will immediately run away. 」

To say she had an awful face, Origa almost cried for a different reason. Abruptly, Hifumi patted her cheek almost causing her heart to stop.

「 When throwing the shuriken at the tree, loosen your expression, do it more comfortably. Don't just throw it, aim at a spot beforehand and then throw it like I taught you. 」
「 Y-Yes…. 」
「 There is still time. Focus on the tree, and hit it. 」
Origa realised she had slightly calmed down. Breathing deeply, she gripped the shuriken slightly more comfortably, and began to walk forward.
Though her face was red, her emotions were stable.

Kasha found herself near a large tree, practising sword draws, frontal strikes and sword returns(to the sheath).
Strength no longer filled her arms as a result of endlessly repeating it. Still, she drew her sword while taking a half step forward, stepped forward 2 steps while shaving off the tree's bark while slashing downwards, and returned the sword to the sheath while stepping back.
The sheaths housing the two swords were affixed to her waist by metal fittings, leaving enough play to manoeuvre. The previous

slow draws were gone, now it was possible for her to draw in a fluid movement.

「 That's good enough. 」

Hifumi called out, Kasha collapsed on the ground, drenched in sweat, spread-eagled.
「 Tireeed~ 」

「 Drink water properly. When moisture is insufficient, movement becomes duller. Don't drink too much though. 」
Taking the wooden flask, Kasha drank some, splashed herself with some of it, and with a refreshed expression looked at Hifumi.

「 How's that master? I think my form is considerably good. 」
Kasha had single-mindedly absorbed the footwork learned from Hifumi resulting in the current movements that made her hips the core.

「 You've done well in a short while. Thanks to your hips twisting for stability, the need to brandish your swords is gone. 」
「 Hips twisting…… saying it like that is… dirty. 」

「 The heck? Leaving that aside, next is a mock battle with me…. Don't look at me like that, we're using wooden swords. 」

On hearing about the mock battle, Kasha glumly took the two wooden swords passed to her. The wooden swords were the same as her original ones, about 70cm long blades. Hifumi too took 2 swords with about 3cm difference in length between them and faced her.

「 Master, the lengths are different… 」

「 Pay attention. I will demonstrate the true usage two swords. 」
(TN: I'm pretty sure he's referencing Musashi here.)

「 Both my arms are now in better condition. Even if master is the opponent…. Here I come! 」

Dodging Kasha's swords, Hifumi's longer sword abruptly changed direction to parry… at the same time the shorter sword drove into Kasha's side. Of course, there was no damage to internal organs, but it was painful.

「 Gu….. No more! 」

The two swords simultaneously drilled forward, the longer one suppressing Kasha's twin swords, while the shorter one struck the pit of her stomach.
Unable to breathe, Kasha dropped the swords and fell over.

「Think about the advantages of two swords. You lack the skill to wield two swords with a scary atmosphere. 」

「 Uu….the movements today… 」

「 It is the basics of the basics. Do it again and again for the body to remember. 」

「 That's a dirty way of saying it. 」

「 Stop playing the fool and quickly get up. 」

They were repeatedly instructed again and again. Unbeknownst to them, Hifumi had obtained another demon hunting request.
Like this, when evening fell, the two exhausted slaves were finished.

「 That reminds me, eventually, I want to leave this capital city. 」
While seated for dinner, Hifumi unexpectedly said.

「 Is there a place master wishes to go? 」
Origa asked, stopping her spoon.

「 Before I want to go anywhere, I don't know the geography of this world. Aren't there maps? 」
「 We can receive simple maps in the guild, I think? 」
「 Is that so…. 」

Putting the steamed meat with slightly salty sauce and vegetables in his mouth, Hifumi thought about it for a while.

「 Well, we'll gradually go to another town and country… 」

Hearing Hifumi's decision, Origa and Kasha exchanged glances. The two had a common intention in going to another country.

13. Stronger

In the end, Origa and Kasha said nothing to Hifumi, or rather, it was impossible for them to say it anything.

From the slaves' point of view, it would be unreasonable to get their master involved for the sake of their revenge, so the two decided not to ask him.

Origa had sworn to become stronger and take revenge, following Hifumi's relentless training energetically. Even though gaining power from Hifumi's guidance seemed similar to relying on Hifumi's power, it was different.

After dinner, when Hifumi returned to his room, Origa and Kasha had a discussion.

「 ….Certainly, as Origa said, depending on master one way or the other doesn't feel right. 」

Falling back on the futon while relishing the feeling, Kasha agreed. A soft feeling is kind towards a tired body.

In retrospect, their current hotel was better than the ones they used to frequent as adventurers. In spite of being slaves, their living conditions had improved, Kasha smiled at the irony.

Being able to choose what to eat; how much to eat, is it thanks to the extreme practice that their figures were maintained? On the contrary, it feels like their figures had tightened.

「But if this continues, we'll never get our revenge….. Master is kind, on getting an opportunity, he will listen to our request… though that's what I think.. 」(Origa)

He is certainly kind. (Kasha)

He doesn't hesitate to kill those hostile to him, regardless of their standing or authority. Conversely, he is kind to those he calls family, the two slaves can also live life without discomfort. There is neither abuse nor sexual assault.

Origa, sitting on the bed brushed her pale green hair. Combing her freshly-washed beautiful and lustrous hair, even Kasha of the same

sex was charmed.

Generally slaves are lucky if they can occasionally bathe with cold water. We can wash our bodies everyday with hot water, can also buy and use everyday necessities.

Objectively seen, he's a kind master, thought Origa.

「 But…. 」

Something caught in Kasha's chest.

Not complaining the slightest and thankful for the good treatment, Kasha frankly admired Hifumi's personality. Substantially different from those she encountered till now.

「 What's wrong? 」

「 Iya～, it's nothing. My weariness was easily relieved by resting while cleaning myself. 」

Kasha showed Origa a smile, who seemed to hold goodwill towards Hifumi, while worrying pointlessly.

「 It's time for bed. We have to expect Master's severe training starting tomorrow morning again. 」

「 You're right. Have a good night. 」

「 Good night. 」

Somehow, her real worries lie in how not to hurt her best friend's feelings, Kasha prayed in her heart.

The next day, Pajou, who was wearing a uniform, went to the dining room where three people were eating their breakfast.

「 There is a report on the Marquis from a few days ago, is that fine? 」

「 Yes. 」

「 Excuse me then. 」

Since Origa was sitting in front of Hifumi, Pajou naturally went to sit down on the vacant seat beside Hifumi.

Pajou quickly confirmed that the surrounding people will not overhear her, she pulled the chair silently.

「 A considerable number of documents in the Marquis' mansion were been burnt by the fire. But the documents that I salvaged revealed a lot of information. They're smugglers….. Actually, a trading company was established under a different name for that purpose. We are now investigating the premises of the trading company. 」

During these past few days, the 3rd Knight's Corp and the Public Security Corp have been investigating together. they discovered a building a ways away from the commercial area of the royal capital,registered under this trading company. But when the combined force of both Corps entered the place, it was completely abandoned.

「 So why did you intentionally tell me this? 」

「 Because you were involved in this. Though the Marquis' attempted murder was stopped, the money made from smuggling was used for political maneuvering within the Imperial Court. The Marquis' son…… The knight that you killed during the audience with the King, was able to enter the Imperial Knights Corp at a young age. A position that brings them closer to the royal family, and used their wealth on the nobles to create a large faction. 」

To be acquainted with the royal family like that, "A young excellent knight with good family background, betrothed to the imperial princess" is what they were getting around to. If a problem in succession should arise, they'd appeal to the person sitting on the throne for a child, they really planned this for the long haul. Acknowledging it to that extent, there is a possibility to politically manipulate the maternal relatives of the royal family

Having their grand scheme with the King summoning the hero collapse as a result of killing the son, who is also knight. They aimed at taking revenge on Hifumi.

「 Hmm, if it's like that, those within the high-ranking nobles must be dealt inconspicuously. Collect evidence from the officials to arrest them and be done with it. Announce publicly that the Marquis died from an illness, and the knight had an accident during training. 」

However, the investigation for anyone connected to the trading company have been pushed through, it has been discovered that the scale of the simple smuggling operation is a problem.

「 The amount of money involved is too big. They were able to secretly move goods of staggeringly huge value back and forth. To make matters worse, there is no information on the individuals that buys through the trading company. Furthermore thanks to the company, all the items sold have been settled already. The purchases seem to have influenced the founding of the trading

company. 」

Thereupon, Pajou turned to Origa and Kasha.

「 Origa-san and Kasha-san isn't it. Before becoming slaves, have you two done any work regarding a jewel called "Aqua Sapphire"? 」

To Pajou's question, Origa's body twitched.

Kasha looked sharply at Pajou.

「 …..Indeed, we received the task of transporting a jewel of such a name. However, that was merely by chance. 」

「 Pajou, stop this roundabout behavior. 」

「 ……Understood. I will explain from the beginning. In addition, there is a request for adventurer Hifumi-san, from the Orsongrande kingdom. 」

Facing Hifumi, Pajou began to explain with an earnest gaze.

Listening to Pajou's explanation and telling her they would reply to the request the next day, Hifumi, Origa and Kasha gathered in Origa and Kasha's room.

「 So, this matter about this "Aqua Sapphire" is the source of your debts, and the reason you are slaves. 」

「 Yes… 」

After listening to Pajou's explanation Origa had a brooding expression on her face. Sitting next to her, Kasha grasped Origa's shoulder, eyes downcast. The details of the Knight Corps' investigation were told to them.

Origa and Kasha had received a request to safely transport "Aqua Sapphire", an expensive jewel among the nobles from a craftsman. Since there were a large number of adventurers who wanted the request, in order to travel comfortably to other towns and sightsee, the guild did a recommendation.

The Aqua Sapphire is a speciality of Orsongrande's, and without the Royal family's permission, it is forbidden to carry it outside the country. Because of it's extraordinarily high price, from the time it

is collected, processed and then sold, reporting its whereabouts is essential. Ordinary thieves do not aim for it since selling it outside the country is not easy, as it can be easily traced.

Origa and Kasha were carrying the Aqua Sapphire to the destination town with their documents being verified by soldiers at various stops along the highway, over the period of some days. The client was supposed to be at the destination town according to the craftsman.

However, upon entering the town and checking the artisan's wooden box, there was no Aqua Sapphire inside.

Naturally, the client was angry and Origa and Kasha had to pay compensation, but it was not an amount an ordinary adventurer could pay.The payment deadline passed, and they ended up as slaves.

「 The moment it was decided that we would be slaves, the client was laughing unpleasantly.At that moment, we realised…. 」

Kasha sighed, letting out a self-mocking laugh.

「 The client at that time, a guy called Beirevura seemed to be a representative of the firm related to the Marquis. 」

It was said that the destination town was managed by a viscount affiliated with the Marquis' faction. Most likely, the soldiers received orders from the Marquis to extract the Aqua Sapphire at a checkpoint while entering the town. If multiple soldiers were accomplices, then it could not be helped.

According to the information, it was a very simple trap to set up. Origa and Kasha were caught magnificently.

The documents recovered from the Marquis's home confirmed that the Marquis' company was going to take the missing Aqua Sapphire to Vichy. It was here that Origa and Kasha's names came up.

「 In short, a crime was fabricated for the missing jewel, which was taken out of the country behind the scenes. 」

Beirevura was going to Vichy using the permit with the Marquis' signature on it. The Knight Corps network extended only until the Vichy border, and they could not act beyond without possibly antagonizing the other country, so any result was dubious at best.

「 And I can unexpectedly help this country since I have permission to leave, and work there as an adventurer. 」

The contents of the request that Pajou brought was to find Beirevura in Vichy, and investigate the other party associated with this scheme.

Originally, someone from the Knights should go, but there is no way to explain a knight coming from another country. If it's Hifumi, it is possible since it is not uncommon for adventurers to cross borders for work. Even though he has a peerage, that title is not used in other countries.

This was requested to the guild, and they nominated HIfumi, who understood that it was an appeal from the country without any tricks.

「 Well then, what to do. 」

On that note, the incident involving Strauss of Horant momentarily came to mind, but was left aside as it was not as important as the Vichy situation.

Unable to decide where to go, Hifumi thought of this opportunity as a good chance to explore Vichy.

The kingdom will prepare a horse and carriage. He wanted to fight other people as well, not just ones from Orsongrande.

「 For the two of you, it's an opportunity for revenge, how about it? 」

When Hifumi asked the question, Origa, who had fallen silent at the beginning, sitting on the floor bowed her head.

「 Master, please forgive me for saying such a selfish thing. If it is possible, the chance to take revenge…. 」

Not waiting for Hifumi's reaction, Origa began to talk as though a dam had burst.

「 At that time, if I had not rushed Kasha and confirmed the contents of the box properly…. Because of me, Kasha got dragged in. I have never forgotten that moment. Receiving weapons from master, being instructed in fighting, practising, all thanks to master. To compensate, even if master kills me, I will not regret it. So

please let me take revenge. 」

「 Origa, you still cared about that thing…. I never regretted pairing with you! I have never held you as responsible for what happened that time….. 」

Seeing Origa crying her eyes out, Kasha was unable to hold back her own tears.

To Kasha sitting on the floor and earnestly asking while lowering her head, Hifumi said

「 Origa, tell me clearly. 」

「 This is my revenge. Without it, everything is meaningless. 」

「 It is …..our revenge, Origa. 」

「 Kasha….. 」

「 Hmm….. Well then, shall we go? To Vichy. 」

Towards the master's decision, Origa lowered her head again, but to the next words, their eyes became dots.

「 Personal battles stack up good experience. 」

「 Ee? Experience…? 」

Seeing the bewildered Origa, Hifumi stood up and laughed.

「 Put simply, the culprits causing trouble for my slaves are the ones pulling the strings. Others will come to try and kill you to tie up loose ends. Feel free to kill them without reserve. 」

「 For a hidden investigation to go smoothly, causing a disturbance…… 」

Kasha inadvertently retorted.

「 In one week, I will drive in the basics of personal combat. Origa, review the use of the shuriken and magic carefully. I will also coach Kasha very strictly. Also, we have to prepare for travel, we'll be very busy! 」

Hifumi left the room first to start preparing, the two watching him leave in blank amazement.

14. Decadence Dance

Hifumi doesn't sympathize with Origa and Kasha's feelings. Regardless he bought the stuff they needed for the trip one after another without, just putting it into the Dark Hole storage as he went onto the next shop. Origa and Kasha seemed to have been in a bad mood, answering Hifumi's question about traveling in this world in rapid succession, while busily choosing different merchandise.

"Tent, firewood, cooking utensils and……maybe a torch just in case."

"Master, I have a question about your Dark Hole storage, does it have enough capacity……"

Generally, one is said to have a good level in the darkness system if one's storage space is $3m^2$, though that level has already been exceeded.

「 Aa, there's still a considerable amount of space, if I sensed it correctly. 」

「 Not just the sword, master is amazing at magic as well. 」

「 I can use only Dark magic. Come to think of it, half of the castle's treasury is in my storage. Even so, not even 1/10th is filled. The entire carriage will fit, but the horse is no good. 」

「 Entire carriage….. 」

Already unable to take pride in her level, Origa's common sense no longer mattered.

Kasha, not knowing the details, simply commented 「 Amazing 」.

「 Well then, let's buy the carriage and horses. You two, can you ride horses? 」

「 I can drive a carriage. 」

「 Me too, I can handle it a little bit…… 」

Answering the two, Hifumi shook his head.

「 Not a carriage, I'm talking about riding a horse. The carriage can only be used to play for a while. 」

「 To play……..? 」

「 Aa, I thought of it after listening to your story. Well, look forward to it. Leaving that aside, horses it is then. I don't want a leisurely trip by carriage, worrying about the luggage. Everyone will make the trip on horseback. 」

While they were walking towards the stables, Kasha frantically stopped Hifumi.

「 Wait a minute master, neither Origa nor I have ridden a horse before! Moreover, wouldn't it be more expensive in the long run to have to change horses at intervals? 」

Hifumi was clearly disappointed at Kasha's words.

「 Eh～…… Well then, after the tomorrow morning's fighting practice, the afternoon will consist of horse riding practice. 」

「 S-Seriously….. 」

Hifumi looked sternly at the speechless Kasha.

「 It is the basics of cavalry battles. Once arrows are spent, horses are tired, spears snap, swords break, you are left empty-handed. Subduing martial arts is a matter of course. 」

「 Battle? Has master been training in order to see battle? 」

「 Nn….. train so that if caught up in a war, you have the ability to protect yourselves, no matter what happens. 」

Saying so, Hifumi took out 10 gold coins from the Dark Hole and passed them to Kasha.

「 Wh-What do I do with so much money! 」

「 Buy groceries. Also get somewhat large quantities of salt and sugar. Enough to last for 30 days with three meals a day. Don't worry about it rotting, I'll be putting it in storage. 」

「 Master, even with a carriage, it is 5 days to the Vichy border…. 」

「 Moreover, can master carry such an amount? 」

「 The quantity is large. The food is not just for eating. Getting someone to carry the luggage to the inn will also cost money. 」

Saying he would get the horses and carriage, Hifumi separated from the two.

Facing the castle, Kasha felt somewhat anxious.

「 Kasha, let's go and buy the required goods. 」

「 Isn't Origa uneasy? 」

「 I'd be lying if I said I wasn't uneasy, but somehow I feel that it's not that bad. Moreover, I have faith in him and can do nothing but follow for now. 」

「 Is that so… 」

The Knights were enjoying their tea and did not notice the station door opening soundlessly.

「 Yo. 」

「 Buho !…..Geho, geho…. 」

Seeing Hifumi suddenly sit down in front of her eyes, Pajou performed a magnificent spit take.

「 ……You came here. 」(Pajou)

「 Is it that astonishing? Really, for a lady to do something like this…… 」

Quickly cleaning the table dirtied by her choking, the teary-eyed Pajou regained her composure while sitting back down.

「 Since there are factions that are hostile to you, I did not want you to come here. 」

「 I only remove those who get in my way, so it's fine. 」

Hearing him say it's fine, Pajou sighed, telling the lady attendant of the station to bring two cups of tea, since the contents of her own cup was gone. The other Knights listened at a distance.

「 So, why the sudden visit? 」

「 Horses and a carriage. Regarding the request you brought, regarding the country making the preparations? Three horses, I'd like to choose them. 」

「 ……Is the carriage unnecessary? 」

「 No, though we will be primarily riding the horses, we'll use the carriage occasionally. Prepare a carriage with a canopy, drawn by two horses. 」

Seeing Pajou's dumbfounded face, Hifumi smirked, the corners of his mouth rising slightly.

Wetting his throat with the tea, Hifumi spoke.

「 Though trifling, for example, the Viscount in the Marquis' faction, what about him? 」

「 Viscount Hagenti. 」

The relationship between the Viscount and Marquis was said to be an "Open secret of High society", though there were some business dealings, there was no public connection. Therefore, after Marquis Raghlain was arrested, Viscount Hagenti was not charged with any crimes.

Viscount Hagenti governs the territory near Vichy, though his martial prowess is nonexistent, he was said to be shrewd man.

「What is the name of the town where the incident happened? 」

「The town of Fukaroru. It's halfway to Vinchy…… What do you intend to do there? 」

「Maa, I just want to play around and have some fun 」

「Pajou scowled when Hifumi didn't answer her directly 」

「…… I doubt that's the end of it, however, I understand your request. I will make preparations for the carriage. It will be placed in the inn's depot. Since the horse track is at a different location, do you want me to guide you there? 」

「Please do 」

Pajou stood up at Hifumi's answer, a big guy near her side wearing an armor of the Knights Corps called out to her.

「Is that the guy that the announcement said we're forbidden from antagonizing? The one favored by the princess?」

「What do you want Gothras?」

「I don't have any business with you. I do have business with that kid」

His height is around 180cm, even with the armor you can see the trained muscles. Having a beard on his face, he was grinning while glaring at Hifumi.

「Wait. Do you have anything to say to him? Imeria-sama instructed us not to do so」

「I'm not going to be hostile. I just want to see a little bit what kind of guy he is. What's so good about a gangly brat like him? This will make Third Knight Corps lose face, does he look that strong to you?」

Blatantly insulting, for Pajou it was an insult to the Third Knight Corps, not to Hifumi personally but to the Knight Corps itself. An act that can potentially make you a traitor to this country.

As for the other Knights who were inside the station, they were keeping their distance and watching the situation. They all look tense, contemplating whether or not to pull out their weapons

The Second Knight Corps is an elite military unit who deals with maintaining security and public order. The First Knight Corps stationed in the castle are also an intelligence unit, but are deployed anywhere, unlike the Third Knights Corps. They're all dedicated to their jobs and many of them are hot-headed, Gothras included.

Besides, the Nobles in the Castle, the civil service employees and the military officers tend to dislike anyone given special treatment regardless of strength and or achievements.

「……Such an incompetent person judging by their appearance, you'd be more useful singing. Is there enough money in the kingdom's budget to be able to employ such an incompetent man?」

Hifumi's question was directed towards Pajou, completely ignoring Gothras.

By the way, regarding the financial situation of Orson Grande, the prime minister has taken control of the national assets and a few works of art were sold.

「Incompetent you say? This brat got arrogant from having a preferential treatment. Princess' pet…… 」

Gothras wasn't able to finish his sentence as he fell down in one knee while shaking his head.

「You can't even avoid an attack of this level. You might not even understand it. You're weak and stupid. 」

A light blow of striking under the chin with a thrust of the palm is enough to make someone dizzy and unable to stand.

The other knights didn't understand what just happened, they're completely confused and don't know what to do.

「Let's go Pajou 」

「Wha, What…… 」

「Wait!! 」

Facing Hifumi who turned around, Gothras stood up unsteadily while drawing his sword out with his shaky hands

「Pajou 」

「Ye- Yes! 」

「Did that guy pull out a sword? What would you do? 」

Pajou was momentarily confused, but she realised that it was Hifumi's timely assist. She shouted out to all the surrounding knights.

「Everyone, draw you sword! 」

It seems they are trained properly. Everyone who heard Pajou's voice pulled out their sword and took a stance.

「That's right Pajou. Us knights must not be underestimated.We

have to teach this guy the difference in our positions」

Gothras grinned but, Pajou gave an order that is opposite of what he expected.

「Everyone, surround Gothras! Arrest him in violation of the order given by Imeraria-sama」

「What!?」

Barely recovered from his dizziness, Gothras opened his eye wide and glared at the nearby knights but it's already too late as he was already surrounded, He stared at Pajou with killing intent.

「You traitor!」

「It's you who is the traitor, Gothras. Those who defy the order from the royal family for selfish reasons are not suitable to be Knights. Obediently drop your weapon and let your hands be tied down.」

Clenching his teeth as he trembles in anger towards Hifumi rather than Pajou, Gothras recklessly attacked.

「Gothras!」

「What did you say bastard!」

He was able to shake free from Pajou's restraint in one blow, went passed by Hifumi's front but was knocked down to the floor.

「Ah? What are you doing!」

Hifumi visibly trampled on the body as he went down. This messed up Gothras sense of distance, he slashed towards him hitting nothing but empty air.

Hifumi stepped on the sword, grasped a small blade and thrust it to into Gothras' elbow pit, through the thin muscle.

With his arm incapacitated he dropped the sword, then the pommel of the small blade was driven through Gothras' forehead.

Gothra's eyes turned white as he fell down, the Knights tied him up immediately

「……I entrust the cleanup to you」

「You have our gratitude」

Pajou bowed down elegantly at Hifumi's remark while he returned the small blade to his breast pocket

「Aa, and so…… 」

「Yes」

While still bowing down, Pajou was nervous at what he was going to say. If he is going to vent his anger, she can't stop him from meeting Imeraria to personally scold her.

「Please teach my slaves, Origa and Kasha, how to ride a horse tomorrow 」

「Waa~…… a, um, it's my pleasure to instruct them 」

「It's good that you willingly assent. Because those girls are quite strong, you might as well be strict to them for a week」

Thinking that it was all about work, Pajou dropped her shoulders in relief.

Then during these seven days, it is very harsh for Origa and Kasha. During morning, Hifumi lectures them on the on how muscles are connected to the human skeletal system, while tormenting them during practice.

Particularly, Pajou's fighting spirit was unusual. While constantly changing horses, she was able to force the knights horse riding training course (which usually takes 30 days) onto them in only 7 days.

Thus, the afternoons became completely free time for Hifumi, so he went shopping, and requested new weapons from Thorn.

「Tools and food are ok. Now to select a horse…… Ah, I know」

Hifumi walks around town while confirming the contents of their luggage, he suddenly stopped and turned around, he called out a young man.

「Hey, I want you to relay a message to Pajou or Midas」

「Eh!? How, how did you…… 」

「I immediately knew based on how the Knights walk. It's good for me if you're trained in marching, but you have to think about it a little more if you want to blend in」

While wearing the expression of smiling while crying, the young knight remembered what Midas said to him 「If you are exposed, be at ease」

「I understand. What is it that I need to relay?」

「Since I was already paid, there is something I want you to prepare 」

The knight took out a piece of parchment from his breast pocket, prepared his writing materials, which were pieces of charcoal wrapped in cloth, and got ready to write.

「One Aqua Sapphire. Many have appeared on the market so the size must be excellent. Certificate of Purchase under my name with Authorization Letter from the Kingdom 」

「Why these things……」

「The person who profited by swindling the partner, he's quite the one trick pony」

That's why those who stop thinking are useless. Hifumi looked towards the castle.